On the Cover: Blair’s Orchestra and Singers traveled to Italy and Austria over spring break to perform back-to-back concerts in some of Europe’s most historic cathedrals. At the San Zeno Basilica in Verona, student musicians were enthusiastically received by an audience of morning worshipers. Thanks to Blair’s dedicated faculty, such incredible opportunities have become standard fare for Blair’s performing arts department in recent years (to read more about the program’s extraordinary growth, please turn to page 04). Photo by Luca Bertoli.
Hitting All the High Notes

The performing arts at Blair continue to flourish as the School expands hands-on learning and global travel opportunities for student performers, many of whom had the chance to hone their craft and expand their horizons during a spring-break European concert tour.

Blair Bids Farewell to the Bacons

As he prepares to retire in June 2015, Blair's longtime Dean of Academics Sam Bacon reflects on his 44-year career in education, the last 25 of which he spent at Blair.

Building a Network of Connected Alumni

Blair graduates from 1958 to 2013 talk about why they chose to become involved in Blair's alumni networking program—and why you should, too.

Blazing Trails in the Arts

Although they graduated from Blair in different eras and followed unique paths to artistic fulfillment, Dick Boak '68 and Tim Fite '95 both credit Blair teachers with helping them start out on the right foot.
Sydney Altman ’16

Sydney photographed “Peering Through the Cracks” in 2014 while visiting Montepulciano, Italy, a “breathtakingly simplistic” Italian town in the region of Tuscany. Calling the picture a “window into the simplicity of our everyday lives,” she hopes viewers will feel a connection with the photo’s subject as she dries and folds her laundry, appreciating the effortlessness of her work and the beauty of her surroundings.
Musicians, actors, dancers and speakers from every grade and level of talent and ability gather their courage, rehearse their parts and navigate through nerves to entertain, inform and enlighten their teachers and classmates. The fact that so many students embrace performance speaks volumes about life in our learning community and spotlights the transformational power of the Blair experience, made possible by our dedicated and supportive faculty and staff.

This has been an exceptional year for student performances, including a record number of student Chapel talks, amazing concerts delivered by our Orchestra and Singers, incredible A Cappella interludes at Sharpe House, heartfelt Blair LEADS tribute speeches and, of course, a host of brilliant theatrical productions. Although this short list alludes to the wide range of activities taking place on and off campus, it barely scratches the surface in terms of encompassing all that our students are doing to showcase their communication and performance skills.

Beyond encouraging students to tackle such opportunities with enthusiasm, Blair also teaches them that in-depth preparation is essential to delivering strong, confident and moving performances. Our teachers work tirelessly to instill in our students not only the mechanics of fingerings and inflection, or the wording of speech, but also the poise to realize, deep in their hearts, that they can carry their performance off—in fine fashion—in front of audiences of all sizes. Because they know our students so well, Blair teachers are uniquely suited to nurture and encourage kids’ performance aspirations. And what a joy it has been to experience the applause, stream of high-fives, shout-outs and hugs our performers receive from faculty and peers when they put themselves out there on stage. Even thousands of miles away from Blairstown, I am awed by the supportiveness of this community—not only by the accolades but in the feedback that encourages even our youngest or least-extroverted students to take a performer’s leap of faith.

Study after study has demonstrated that participation in the performing arts benefits students in countless ways—they do better academically; it enhances their emotional intelligence; and it emphasizes essential skills in communication, problem-solving and teamwork. I am proud and inspired to be part of a School that has cultivated so many opportunities for students to get outside their comfort zones and embrace the performing arts. I was so inspired, in fact, that shortly before spring break, I, too, put myself in our students’ shoes and opened my own Chapel speech with a piano performance. While I speak very frequently to our community and beyond, this was the first time I had performed publicly in many years, and I can tell you, it gave me newly reinforced appreciation and empathy for our students’ bravery and talent—so much so that I am inspired to once again make music a bigger part of my life.

I know that you, too, will surely be moved by our kids’ passion, talent and willingness to take on some very challenging roles, and I hope that you will join us for a student performance in the near future, whether in person or online via livestream. And, as always, I thank you for the role that each of you plays in making the Blair experience—and amazing opportunities like this trip across the Atlantic—possible.

Christopher Fortunato
Head of School
In the days leading up to spring break this March, 70 Blair student musicians excitedly packed their bags and attended final rehearsals before flying off to Europe for a week-long performance tour across Italy and Austria. In between concerts in Venice, Verona, Padova and Salzburg, the Blair Academy Orchestra and Singers attended master classes and rehearsed with Austrian musicians, toured historic cathedrals and museums, and engaged with local residents.

As the week wound to a close, students talked enthusiastically about their concerts, the beautiful and historic sites they toured, and, of course, the pizza they ate. Clearly, Director of Instrumental Music Jennifer Pagotto and Director of Vocal Music Nate Widelitz had prepared them well for the trip, and their cultural and artistic experience will continue to shape their studies for the rest of the spring semester.
Welcome to the performing arts at Blair in the year 2015, where once-in-a-lifetime opportunities like this have become, well, if not routine, then increasingly standard as the School continues to make hands-on learning and global travel a priority.

For those of us who attended Blair during a different era, the growth of the music and theatre programs over the last 20 years has been nothing short of astounding. While the School has always attracted students and faculty who embrace artistic expression, the late-1990s construction of Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts—a space entirely dedicated to the art of performing—was a game-changer.

The opening of this state-of-the-art facility gave rise to a new kind of performing arts department at Blair, one that had the resources to champion the development of instrumental musicians as well as the talents of the Blair Academy Singers and Blair Academy Players. In the last decade alone, performing arts department chair Jennifer Pagotto has transformed the School’s small wind symphony and string ensemble into a 60-person Orchestra that regularly performs on and off campus. The Blair Academy Singers continue to make quality their focus, tackling a challenging choral repertoire, often in concert with the instrumental groups and smaller, auditioned choirs. Ten years ago, the Blair Academy Players increased their annual productions from three to five, giving student actors more opportunities than ever to gain experience in script reading, set and lighting design, and directing, as well as performing.
Crediting her department’s warm and welcoming philosophy to theatre veteran and former department chair Craig Evans, who “felt very strongly that the arts should be accessible to all Blair students, from the novice to the advanced,” Mrs. Pagotto is proud of what she and her fellow faculty members—theatre instructors Mr. Evans, Micki Kaplan McMillan and Wayne “Razz” Rasmussen, and music teacher Mr. Widelitz—have accomplished since she came to Blair in 2005.

“We work our students hard in rehearsal, but we also give them the opportunity to have a lot of fun and to develop deep and lasting relationships with their teachers and classmates,” she explained. “Not only does this lead to great performances, but it develops a camaraderie among theatre casts and music ensembles that allows students to feel comfortable taking risks and, ultimately, to do better work.”

Relationship-Based Confidence & Trust
It is, in fact, this camaraderie—as well as the contagious enthusiasm of Blair students, teachers and alumni alike—that most distinguishes the program for kids of all class years.

“You can tell that there isn’t a single performer on Blair’s stage who doesn’t love what he or she does,” said Ernesto Lippert ’18, a freshman with many years of experience as a violinist, singer and actor, who performed and traveled with the Orchestra and Singers and acted in A Flea in Her Ear and The Mystery of Edwin Drood this year. “Blair has changed the way I see the performing arts. The air here is full of excitement about performing new pieces and eagerly anticipating opening night. Best of all, I don’t have to choose just one area of focus, and my teachers and friends have encouraged me to continue developing all my skills as a performer.”

Because performance art can at times be emotionally demanding, it is natural that ensembles and casts become a bit like family. In Blair’s close-knit community, where kids often really get to know everybody across campus, performing becomes an even more personal experience, both for those on stage and in the audience.

“There is a lot of friendship in the performing arts department, and it is not limited to one section of the Orchestra, just the tenors or a few members of the cast,” said musician and actor Phil Hettinger ’16, who plays the trumpet and has starred in three Blair productions, including The Putnam County Spelling Bee (2013), Night of One Acts (2014) and Drood (2015). “The sense of community and support at Blair is so strong, it makes it exciting to get on stage and share with others how much you love what you are doing.”

Violinist Megan Maher ’13, who worked closely with Mrs. Pagotto as concertmaster for the Orchestra during her senior year, wholeheartedly agrees. “Although I had been playing most of my life, the atmosphere at Blair brought me back to the joy of music, of individually and collectively creating something beautiful that moves your audience,” said Megan, who now performs in the chamber orchestra at Williams College. “Some of my favorite Blair moments were onstage with my closest friends. More than that, Blair teachers view music as a universal language of expression, and that really instills in students a lifelong love of the performing arts, something for which I am very grateful.”

The sense of camaraderie that exists around the arts at Blair is one of the things that keeps faculty members passionate about what they do. “My favorite part of my job is building relationships with students and getting to know them across contexts,” said Ms. McMillan, who has taught theatre at Blair since 2006 and directs a play each winter and spring. “When you are doing this many productions a year, you end up spending a huge amount of time together, which builds friendships, develops trust and inspires confidence. I consider my students part of my family, and the performing arts department here facilitates that.”
It helps that the program has something to offer all students: Those who identify themselves as actors and musicians and want to pursue careers in the arts have the opportunity to take on leading roles, while students who have never set foot on stage can try something new and outside their comfort zone.

“The Blair community rallies around the fact that performing arts attracts all kinds of kids,” Ms. McMillan explained. “A few years ago, one of our top-ranked wrestlers, Evan Silver ’11, who had no previous theatre experience, nailed it as the lead of The Nerd. Likewise, Shea Lawless ’15, captain of the cross-country team, stepped on stage for the first time in a recent production of The Real Inspector Hound and wowed the audience. It is rewarding to watch students of all different backgrounds take risks and become excited about theatre. The whole campus supports them.”

Mike Park ’16 admits that is one of the aspects he loves most about Blair: The community is so supportive that students don’t hesitate to follow their passions and “put themselves out there,” whether that means acting in a theatrical production, performing in a music concert, delivering a Chapel presentation or making a School Meeting announcement. “No one looks down at it; in fact, we all admire and respect each other for having the courage to stand up in front of the community,” he said.

**Choice Without Limits**

The sheer volume of performing arts options is a favorite aspect of the program among students and alumni.

In addition to offering a full Orchestra and private lessons taught by conservatory-trained musicians, student instrumentalists can play in the String Orchestra, Wind Symphony, Jazz Ensemble, various chamber ensembles and Pit Orchestra (which collaborates with the Blair Academy Players to produce the School’s annual winter musical). Vocalists can join the Blair Academy Singers, audition for the Chamber Choir or the student-run A Cappella group, or receive one-on-one instruction in private voice lessons.

With five theatre productions to choose from each year—including one musical—and theatre teachers with diverse tastes and directing styles, Blair actors can explore a range of plays
from different genres. Those interested in the production side of theatre have the opportunity to student direct, and kids who want to learn more about set design can benefit from Razz’s expertise in show scenery and mechanics.

And, as evidenced by the spring-break music trip to Europe, the department also organizes off-campus tours for its musical ensembles and vocalists, giving them the opportunity to, as Mrs. Pagotto put it, “hone their performance skills and develop the mental focus necessary to perform a number of back-to-back concerts away from their home turf.”

Emily Lunger ’17, a member of A Cappella and Singers who has acted in four plays in just two years, counts the diversity of music and theatre offerings among the most exciting aspects of performing arts at Blair. Last year, she had the opportunity to perform in the classic Shakespearean comedy As You Like It (directed by Mr. Evans) instead of the “intense American drama” All My Sons (directed by Ms. McMillan). “With such a wide variety of options, I can explore different styles of acting, which has definitely sparked in me a curiosity about the performing arts that I hadn’t experienced before,” she said. “Blair has opened my eyes to a myriad of ways to express and perceive art, while at the same time promoting a sense of family and community that makes it unlike anywhere else I have been.”

And, as Emily knows firsthand, the School offers a multitude of opportunities to practice skills outside of concerts and plays in less formal venues, such as Sunday Vespers, pep rallies and talent shows. The A Cappella group serenades students and teachers at School Meeting and sings at Trustee and alumni receptions; Ms. McMillan’s theatre class entertains the community with a choreographed performance each Peddie Week (this year, it was a flash mob in the dining hall); and a small group of performers gathers once a week in Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts for “improv” nights as part of a new club founded by Phil and Chris Bottone ’16.

“The Improv Club is an example of how accessible the performing arts are at Blair,” said Phil. “Students can embrace performance from all angles, even on a random Saturday night, not just when there is a scheduled concert, musical or play.”

Real-World Connections
Recognizing how important it is to supplement in-class work with an extracurricular interest in the arts, Blair teachers do as
much as they can to expose students to a range of genres and experiences, both on and off campus. This fall, for example, math teacher John Padden traveled with students to Carnegie Hall in New York City to hear the Czech Philharmonic. Thanks to The Mazza Student Life Fund, established by a generous Blair family to honor the work of Dean of Students Carmelo Mazza, 17 students attended a winter performance of Cabaret on Broadway. And, of course, the students and faculty who traveled to Europe for the performance tour could not leave Italy without attending concerts featuring the music of Vivaldi and Mozart.

Anthony D’Amato ’06, who is pursuing music professionally after studying the performing arts at Blair and Princeton University, fondly recalls history teacher Andrew Sykes and math teacher Josh Markey indulging his passion for music, taking him and fellow students to indie rock and acoustic concerts. But it was accepting Mr. Evans’ invitation to play in a blues band at the pep rally on Peddie Day Eve in the mid-2000s that most encouraged Anthony during his time at Blair.

“This was the first time I had performed in someone else’s band, and I was playing bass rather than singing and playing guitar like I usually do,” said Anthony, who signed with New West Records (home to Steve Earle, Kris Kristofferson and Patty Griffin, among others) and released his new album, The Shipwreck from the Shore, last fall. “I think having that perspective that comes from taking on different roles in a group is really important for any artist, and it’s certainly been useful as I’ve toured around the world and shared stages with some of my favorite artists.”

Anthony, who also tried his hand at acting with the Players, starring in You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown (2005) and Julius Caesar (2006), also agrees that Blair’s efforts to give students a global view of the arts opens up a world of possibility. “I was always encouraged to pursue what interested me and was never told I could only play one type of music,” he said. “Everyone at Blair was very supportive of my interest in music, even teachers outside the arts program. Collectively, they helped me develop the discipline, work ethic and time-management skills I needed to grow as a musician outside of the demanding classroom and study hall hours. And, of course, Armstrong-Hipkins is a fantastic facility, and to have access to it as a young artist was a really wonderful thing.”

A Diversity of Experience
To say that performing arts at Blair is infused with a diversity of experience is also true of the physical spaces in which student musicians and actors practice and perform. When Armstrong-Hipkins opened in 1997, the old stage in Memorial Hall was replaced with a 500-seat main stage in DuBois Theatre and the experimental “black box” in Wean Theatre—to say nothing of the numerous soundproof private practice rooms, costume facilities overseen by assistant drama director Kaye Evans, and the “tech areas” that Razz and his crew of students use to build sets and perfect lighting and sound. In 2004, Mr. Evans also built an outdoor theatre named for his father, Robert, where the Blair Academy Players will perform the contemporary comedy Almost, Maine this spring.

It is no surprise that with hundreds of students sharing these dynamic spaces, fellowship, trust and collaboration have come to define the performing arts at Blair, nurturing in students confidence and belief in their own talents and abilities as performers. “I grew up training in the arts, but Blair was really the first place I was entrusted with leading roles, even when I was still relatively new to the community,” said
Cristina Vivenzio ’00, who went on to study drama at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. “The Blair Academy Players were so nurturing and the sense of camaraderie, excitement and pride for the art we were creating was so strong. Every production, from the direction, to the costumes and Raz’s unbelievable sets, was always top-notch and professional. In that gorgeous theatre, you always felt like you were performing on Broadway!”

In fact, that’s where Cristina works today. In addition to acting, she has also moved over to the production side of the business after graduating from NYU in 2004. She is currently employed by Jujamcyn, a company that owns five Broadway theatres now housing long-running Tony Award–winning musicals, such as The Book of Mormon, Jersey Boys, Kinky Boots and A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder. She credits Blair—and, specifically, faculty member Craig Evans—with giving her the tools to accomplish her lifelong dream of a career on Broadway, even working with the lead producers of the 2013 Tony Award–winning revival of Pippin (a production in which she first starred at Blair in 1999).

“Blair provided a brilliant balance between our academic studies and our artistic passions, which enabled me to succeed in an intensely competitive college program and a very demanding city,” said Cristina. “Blair gave me the tools to balance my academics, my artistic endeavors, my daily responsibilities, friendships, relationships and family. Many times, in an industry generally fueled by passion and drama, other aspects of life can easily get usurped by work. You constantly hear of artists ‘burned out’ by the demands of this business, but I still like to think I am just as enchanted with my field as I always have been, and that is because I strive to maintain the work-life balance I learned at Blair.”

As for Mr. Evans, “I don’t think I can put into words the impact he had on my personal development and career growth,” Cristina concluded. “He directed me when I needed guidance, pushed me when I needed to be pushed, listened to me when I needed to talk, believed in me even when I didn’t believe in myself and, most importantly, taught me to always remember to keep it light. I constantly aim to laugh a lot and keep a positive attitude like Mr. Evans, because at the end of the day, I get to work in a field that I love and will never take that gift for granted.”

**Teachers Who Make a Lasting Impact**

Cristina is not alone in sharing this sentiment about the difference Blair’s performing arts teachers make in the lives of their students. “Mrs. Pagotto was instrumental in my development as a student, musician and so many other things,” said Megan, who not only played the violin in the Pit Orchestra for Sweeney Todd (2012) and Seussical (2013), but also acted in Cyrano de Bergerac (2012), Wonder of the World (2012) and Our Town (2013). “She was so knowledgeable, so personable and so kind. Mrs. Pagotto is someone I wish I could take with me to Williams and beyond, as her guidance and support have been so helpful every step of the way. She is simply one of a kind. Fortunately, we still keep in touch!” Megan also credits Mrs. Pagotto with teaching her what it means to be part of an ensemble, and even how to play for the student conductor who is leading her orchestra at Williams.

Phil, on the other hand, has been most impressed by how his teachers treat him like an equal, listening to his opinion and perspective and answering his questions thoughtfully. “Ms. McMillan treats you with so much respect,” he said. “I can have a conversation with her, and she talks to me like I am a college theatre major. It is nice to have the chance to interact with her in an adult setting and have her consider me a colleague in our productions.” Mike agrees, commending Ms. McMillan for creating a professional environment where actors can focus intently on character development.
For Ernesto, it is impossible to choose just one teacher who has had the most impact: Mr. Widelitz as director of the Singers, Mrs. Pagotto as conductor of the Orchestra, Mr. Evans as director of his latest play and musical, or Razz as set designer and manager of Armstrong-Hipkins. Simply put: “There is not one teacher who hasn’t greatly affected me in some way,” he said.

Given the rave reviews they receive from students, it is natural that the teachers in the department work well together and collaborate on a number of projects throughout the year, often with the help of faculty members from other disciplines (including some regulars, such as fine arts teacher Andee Ryerson and science teachers Mike Ryerson and Michael Sayers). One such project is the winter musical, which involves the Players, Pit Orchestra, voice coaching, set design and construction, dance choreography, and costume design. Of course, Razz, charged with audiovisuals and overseeing the performance spaces in Armstrong-Hipkins, continues to be a mainstay in every single School play, musical and concert.

“It is great working with such a talented and dedicated team, from auditions right through production,” said Mr. Evans. “We set a high standard for our productions, which is one reason so many students identify performing arts as the most significant aspect of their Blair careers.”

The department’s newest member is Nate Widelitz, who in a serendipitous coincidence sang in several ensembles with longtime Blair music conductor Chris Eanes when both were studying at the University of Southern California in the mid-2000s. Calling Mr. Widelitz a “great conductor who is truly passionate about music,” Mrs. Pagotto has been impressed to see him infuse music history into rehearsals and select new and engaging repertoire.

“My colleagues bring tremendous energy and an obvious love for what they do to their teaching, and I hope they would say the same about me,” Mr. Widelitz said. “You’d be hard-pressed to find another set of performing arts teachers who are all as invested and fulfilled by what they do as this group.”

And, despite the seriousness of their work, teaching students the skills they need to succeed in college and beyond, the department makes a point of instilling in students their motto of “pride and poise”—while also following Mr. Evans’ sage advice: “Always keep it light.”

In February, they did just that at the department’s annual Academy Awards party, held as it always is at Hanson House, the home of Craig and Kaye Evans. Each year, the teachers make friendly wagers about which films and performers will receive statues. To date, Razz has only won once, likely, Mr. Evans says with good humor, because he spent so much time studying the experts’ picks.

“Blair’s performing arts faculty are really talented, driven and good at what they do, but we also bring a healthy sense of humor to our work, too,” said Mrs. Pagotto. “That inspires our kids to work really hard, but also to find joy in every rehearsal and performance.”
AN ‘Awesome’ EXPERIENCE NOT SOON TO BE FORGOTTEN

For musicians, one of the unique aspects of the performing arts at Blair is the opportunity to regularly perform for audiences both on and off campus.

While all of these opportunities help students hone their musical skills and develop the mental focus necessary to deliver top-notch performances, none of them comes close to the “awesomeness” of delivering back-to-back concerts in some of Europe’s most historic cathedrals and basilicas over spring break. The 70 members of the Orchestra and Singers who traveled to Italy and Austria in March 2015 agree that the experience was “truly amazing” and one that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

“The performing arts are a priority at Blair and a personal passion of mine, particularly as a musician,” said Head of School Chris Fortunato, who accompanied the groups to Venice, Verona, Padova and Salzburg with his seven-year-old son, Matty. “I am immensely proud of our student performers and the exceptional faculty who inspire them and devote so much time and energy to making once-in-a-lifetime opportunities like this happen.”

To ensure that students were fully prepared for the performance tour, Director of Instrumental Music Jennifer Pagotto and Director of Vocal Music Nate Widelitz augmented musical rehearsals with pre-trip lessons about Italian and Austrian history and culture.

“The weekend before the trip, the Singers and Orchestra came together for a rehearsal in the rotunda of Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts, which simulated the acoustics of the Italian and Austrian churches we visited,” said Corinne DiFrancesco ‘15, a member of the Singers and one of the leaders of Blair’s A Cappella group. “It was cool to have a full rehearsal there; we don’t usually get to hear ourselves all together in that space.”

Once in Europe, the group rehearsed and performed in historic spaces with unparalleled acoustics, including the Teatro Aldo Rossi, San Zeno Basilica and Salzburger Dom. Mrs. Pagotto was delighted with the warm welcome the Singers and Orchestra received at every concert venue, noting that the mayor of Borgoricco (the neighborhood outside Padova that houses the Teatro Aldo Rossi) presented the group with lovely gifts. “At San Zeno Basilica, everyone from the priest to the congregants were gracious hosts who expressed joy and appreciation for our music,” she continued. “San Zeno is a magnificent church with great history and, of course, wonderful acoustics. Needless to say, it was a tremendous experience for our musicians.”

In between performances, students attended a Vivaldi concert in Venice,
heard Mozart chamber performances and worked with professional musicians in a master-class setting in Salzburg, and, of course, toured such attractions as St. Mark’s Square, the Roman Arena, “Juliet’s Balcony,” the Hallein Salt Mines and the iconic Hohensalzburg Fortress.

Incorporating such a mix of activities not only ensured that students grew as musicians, artists and communicators but also gave them the opportunity to embrace a rich cultural experience, one that Mrs. Pagotto and Mr. Widelitz hope will become a highlight of their time at Blair.

“Participating in authentic performances for audiences with whom you are unfamiliar—especially in these amazing European venues, unlike any we have Stateside—is an act of courage,” said Mr. Widelitz, who served as an experienced guide in Italy, having just toured there last year while earning his master’s degree in choral conducting from the Yale School of Music. “You have no idea what they are going to think of your interpretation or your execution. Our concerts in Italy and Austria made students grow as communicators and motivated them to be in top form as performers. I was proud to see them give their best performances of the year.”

Of course, students enjoyed exploring “far-off parts of the world” with friends just as much as the incredible musical experience of playing pieces written by Antonio Vivaldi and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in their respective cities of birth. “The sights we saw were simply unbelievable,” said Harry Moore ’17, who plays the bass in the Orchestra and the electric bass in the Jazz Ensemble. “We landed in Munich and drove through the Alps to Italy, a journey that was astonishingly beautiful. It was a unifying and eye-opening experience for all of us, and it was really interesting to get classmates’ perspectives about the parts they liked best. Some were interested in the touristy sights of Venice, while others appreciated the more authentic feel of Padova.”

Mr. Fortunato calls the musical tour “another dynamic highlight” in an impressive array of performances across Blair’s performing arts program this year.

“While we so often bring the world to Blair in the classroom, for Skeptics lectures and guest performances, this was a special opportunity for our students to actually experience cultures and opportunities beyond our hilltop campus, and to showcase their work in amazing performance spaces,” he said. “For me, it was a wonderful chance to connect directly with our students as they created lifelong memories, and for Matty, it was a gift to be surrounded by so many talented and giving role models.”

Students will continue to reflect on their “awesome” musical and cultural experiences throughout the spring semester, both in class and in rehearsal. “The trip also gave the juniors who will lead the ensembles in 2015-2016 the chance to cultivate important leadership skills, setting us up for another excellent year,” said Mrs. Pagotto, who was joined on the European trip by her husband, Associate Head of School Ryan Pagotto ’97. “Every day, our students learn how to play musical masterworks a little bit better, and it is so rewarding to see their progress over the course of their time at Blair, especially during trips like this one.”

To view concert videos and more photos from the trip, visit Blair’s website.

www.blair.edu/italy-and-austria
I’ve Never Had a Day That I Didn’t Want to Come to Work

SAM BACON REFLECTS ON 44 YEARS IN EDUCATION

BY JOANNE MICELI

“Sam and Betsy have been terrifically positive about their life at Blair, always caring and gracious, and opening their home often and with great warmth to the faculty and students throughout their years. Their legacy will be part of the greatness of Blair.”
—FORMER HEADMASTER CHAN HARDWICK
IT IS A FORTUNATE PERSON who can say as he contemplates retirement, “I’ve never had a day that I didn’t want to come to work.” Yet those were the words of veteran Dean of Academics Selden “Sam” Bacon as he reflected on a 44-year career in education, the past 25 of which have been spent at Blair Academy.

Seated in his office in Clinton Hall, surrounded by the literature and poetry texts that are his stock in trade, Sam carved an hour out of his busy schedule to share his thoughts on the “magic” that sometimes happens in the classroom, the blessings of life in the Blair community and the relationships with students and colleagues that he will treasure always.

The Apple Doesn’t Fall Far
Teaching and school life are practically part of Sam’s DNA. The son of two university professors, Sam grew up on the campuses of Yale University and Rutgers University, so even at a young age, the academic calendar was a familiar, predictable part of his life. He never considered a career other than teaching. “I didn’t want to work in the summer,” he said with a wry smile. “I couldn’t imagine doing the same thing in July that I was doing in October.”

Sam earned his bachelor’s degree in American literature at Middlebury College in 1969 and returned to New Jersey (“never to escape,” he noted drolly) to establish his teaching career. He began with a two-year stint as an English teacher at The Hun School in Princeton in 1970, moving in 1973 to Dwight-Englewood School in Englewood, New Jersey, after having taken a year off to do the coursework for his MA in English literature at the University of Vermont.

Sam’s 17 years at Dwight-Englewood were formative ones, as he taught, coached and gained his first experience in the administrative suite, serving as a college counselor and English department chair. Above all, it was the hours spent in the classroom that meant the most to Sam. “At Dwight-Englewood, I learned a lot about teaching from some of the finest teachers I have known,” he said.

The ‘Mercedes in the Mountain’
Sam, his wife, Betsy, and their two-year-old son, Tim, took up residence at Blair Academy in June 1990, with Sam’s oldest daughter, Willa, visiting on many weekends over the years. “Betsy and I felt it was the right time to move; both our families were in New Jersey, and there were many reasons we found Blair attractive,” Sam remarked. “The campus and the positive, upbeat people here made it a promising place to raise a family. In the ’90s, boarding schools were about the last remaining place you could recreate the ‘Leave It to Beaver’ experience for your kids.”

Career-wise, Sam felt coming to Blair was a good move as well. Hired by the School’s new, young Headmaster, Chan Hardwick, Sam was part of the faculty class of 1990 that included Jim Frick, Jim Moore and Maria Bowditch. It meant a lot to Sam that at Blair, faculty and staff were treated equally, receiving the same retirement and tuition benefits. He began his Blair tenure as an English teacher and college counselor but after the first year assumed an administrative role as Dean of Academics.

As for the School itself, in 1990, Sam saw it as a place full of potential and possibility. “Dwight-Englewood was an interesting, growing institution while I was there, and I had the same feeling about Blair,” Sam recalled. He and Jim Moore characterized Blair as a “Mercedes in the mountain,” likening it to a gem of a car a farmer might have hidden under a tarp in the barn: It was something that had been kept up but hadn’t been used to its capacity, and most people didn’t know it existed. But with the state of New Jersey just finishing highways that would give Blairstown one-hour access to Newark International Airport and with the energy of the administration and Trustees, the School was poised for growth. “My God—the potential!” was how Sam put it. “It was all just waiting out there.”

A Day in the Life
How does a work day unfold for Blair’s dean of academics? “Officially, I’m the keeper of the School’s academic records,” Sam said, “but since Blair is a smaller school, administrators here have to be prepared to do anything at any time.
“All of my collateral duties devolve from keeping and maintaining the records and supporting the Head of School,” he continued. Those collateral duties have been significant: Sam has overseen students’ academic scheduling, schedule design, school-year calendar design, curriculum sequencing and faculty scheduling where teaching intersects with curriculum. As a member of Blair’s management team, he has had a hand in emergency preparedness and numerous other aspects of the School’s overall operation. “I attend more meetings than anyone could wish for,” he commented drily.

His days in the office are of varied intensity, a combination of people and mechanics, and a mix of the proactive and reactive. “The proactive fare is pretty standard for me now; things come up on the calendar, and we deal with them—anything from dinner seating to student scheduling. People stop by all day. [Associate Head of School] Ryan [Pagotto ’97] will stick his head in to ask a quick question; I might meet with [Director of Technology] Sam Adams about integrating technology in our curriculum; faculty wander in; admission folks ask me to meet a prospective family; kids come in singing the blues.”

Clearly, though, it’s those kids who are the highlight of Sam’s day. “I teach one section of freshman English. That’s the fun thing that happens four times a week,” he said with a gleam in his eye and a soft smile. “And who wouldn’t like library duty? When you’re there, you get to see kids doing some really cool stuff.” He also makes it a point to sit on the bench at the Clinton Hall crossroads between classes. “We don’t want to be ‘mysteries in offices’ here,” he said. “The kids know where to find me when they need me.”

‘Teaching Is the High Point’

Without a second’s hesitation, Sam divulged his favorite part of work at Blair: teaching English 1. “The other stuff I’ve just been fortunate to be able to do well,” he said. He noted that as an administrator, he has a degree of autonomy over his day. “I hope that doesn’t make me romanticize the classroom experience—but I don’t think it does. I had the day school experience of classes meeting five times a week, lots of testing, lots of grading, so I know what that’s like. Still, teaching is the high point for me.”

Has there been a single memorable moment in a Blair classroom? “I’d have to tell you 100,” he smiled. Recently, a student did a vocabulary quiz creating sentences that used epic epithets throughout. “It was fun—he discovered something,” Sam said. “For me, the excitement happens every day when a kid gets an idea that is somewhat original for a 14- or 15-year-old and just struggles with it. He or she writes about it, and the writing is not good, but we work on it. It’s the idea that’s important, and kids’ effort of writing about something they’ve discovered, not about something I’ve poured down their throats. Those are the magic moments in class.”

Teaching Then Versus Teaching Now

As a teacher who has worked with high-schoolers for more than 40 years, Sam pragmatically observed that “adolescents haven’t changed much—it’s the devices they use to distract themselves that have changed.” He especially likes teaching freshmen, with sophomores a close second. “By the time kids are juniors and seniors, they’re guarded in what they will say,” he noted. “They care a great deal about their images.”

And while Sam has taught the classic works of English and American literature since 1970, in recent years, his teaching method has undergone a seismic shift. “What I did in the classroom for decades was inevitable,” he said. “At Hun, at Dwight-Englewood and at Blair, we’d read the story and discuss the meaning. Kids would write papers full of mistakes, I would grade them. But NOW,” he noted with growing excitement, “I’ve used technology to flip the classroom.”

Sam has created a class website loaded with links and references, and he uses Google Docs masterfully and exclusively to edit and grade student work. In fact, for the past several years, he has not accepted paper submissions of any assignment. “The writing process has changed completely with Google Docs—it allows the teacher to be there with kids electronically,” he said. “Kids can email me when they get stuck, and within minutes, I’ll email back ‘I’m going in.’ I can see where they’re having difficulty and suggest things to try, comment on their progress and see how those comments are resolved. I can look back in a document’s history and see how it’s developed over the last

I’ve Never Had a Day That I Didn’t Want to Come to Work

The truth of the matter is that if Blair is going to remain different from other schools, it has to remain student-centered, and the experience has to be about student-faculty relationships.

—SAM BACON
week, the last month. The smart thing to do is to stop kids before they make the same mistake over and over, and that mistake becomes a bad habit.”

Over the years, Sam has seen classroom technology, such as televisions, smart boards and projectors, come and go, with varying degrees of success. “Google Docs and sharing information on websites—THAT changed teaching for me overnight,” he said. “Kids can learn at home, and they can access the website when they’re in college. And while they say, ‘We never get out of English class,’ this technology allows kids to be their own educators.”

Family Life at Blair—& Beyond
For Sam and Betsy, living at Blair has always been what they’d hoped it would be. “In the 1990s, the School was smaller, and it seemed like there was more time,” Sam reminisced. “Families with kids spent time together. There was more of what you’d call ‘visiting’ going on, and, for a number of families, including ours for many years, one parent worked and the other stayed at home.”

As the Bacons’ children, Tim ’06 and Natalie ’14, grew up on campus (and with their sister, Willa, a regular visitor), they all had opportunities that Sam is sure they never would have had otherwise. “There were many blessings of living at Blair,” Sam said. “Look at the education Tim and Natalie received, look at all the interesting people with whom these three kids were privileged to grow up.”

Sam and Betsy have even had the opportunity to work together professionally at Blair. When Sam’s longtime assistant, Marion Clifford, retired in 2010, Betsy seamlessly stepped into the assistant to the dean of academics role. “It’s been nice working together,” Betsy said. “I’ve enjoyed it.”

Over the years, the Bacons have developed close friendships with many Blair families and co-workers, and this is what Sam will miss most about living at the School. “I won’t miss the detritus of everyday life,” he said. “I’ll miss the relationships I’ve had with intelligent, creative, caring people.”

Sam and Betsy will move to Martha’s Vineyard in June, bringing them closer to several former colleagues who live in New England and closer to Natalie, who attends Colby College in Maine. For now, Sam’s retirement plans include getting settled. “Beyond that,” he said, “call me in six months.”

It’s All About Relationships
For Sam Bacon, as for so many students, faculty and members of the School’s ever-growing family, the heart of the Blair experience is the lasting relationships you develop with the people with whom you live and work.

“The truth of the matter is that if Blair is going to remain different from other schools, it has to remain student-centered, and the experience has to be about student-faculty relationships,” Sam said. “Kids learn more in a 10-minute conversation with a faculty member in a dorm or in the dining room than they do in a month of sitting in the classroom. Blair has always been about the kids—I learned that after I got here. Teaching is not about Frost, or Dickens, or Shakespeare—it’s about how these things get into kids’ lives. That’s what they remember.”

And, even for a veteran teacher, who has pretty much seen it all after four-plus decades in the classroom, the power of relationships can sometimes be a revelation. “I tell young teachers, ‘you have to be very careful what you say around students because you never know when they’re listening,’” he said, and he recounted the story of an advisor letter he wrote about a student whom he felt was “resting on her laurels.” Years later, she wrote to Sam saying she remembered that comment through her whole life and never again rested on her laurels. “I called her and said, ‘You got over it, right?’ She laughed; she was okay.”

The Bacon family (left to right): Sam, Betsy, Natalie ’14, Tim ’06 and Willa at Natalie’s graduation.
Talk about a critical cog in the Blair wheel! Sam Bacon has been an invaluable part of the Blair administration and community for nearly a quarter century. He is a smart, insightful and dependable colleague with a can-do attitude. No task is too complex—or too simple—for his attention.

Sam is a master technician/magician in his ability to work through the complexities of scheduling daily life for 450 students and 90 faculty members. He believes in the importance of training for fire drills and emergency planning because he knows that ensuring the safety of all Blair’s students is the faculty’s greatest responsibility. Who else could embrace those challenges with the optimism and good humor he brings to the task?

And, my goodness, the man is learned. Few are the conversations with Sam that don’t have multiple literary allusions or anatine references. As he often reminded us, “If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, and looks like a duck, it almost certainly is a duck!” Deductive reasoning writ large!

—FORMER ASSISTANT HEADMASTER DAVE LOW

I am immensely grateful for the depth of thought and care that Sam brings to all that he touches at Blair. His wealth of knowledge and experience gained over 40-plus years in education is keenly balanced by insightful and progressive ideas about what should lie ahead in the changing landscape of education. It is a very rare gift to find in someone who has been working in this field for so many years.

Sam is both a stalwart, the rock we can rely on, and the one who can ask the questions that shake the ground beneath our feet, in the best possible way. Invaluable to me has been his ability to provide institutional memory and perspective, to take a thought or idea and contextualize it. He does this in a singularly ‘Sam’ way, with literary allusions that are thoughtful, mercilessly on point and wonderfully humorous. I know if a job needs to be done, he will do it to the utmost of his ability, and that means it will be done exceptionally well.

There is a place adjacent to stage right in DuBois Theatre that, regardless of the individual occupying it during School Meeting next year and beyond, will always, in my mind, belong to Sam Bacon, who served as the watchful, intellectual heart of this School.

—HEAD OF SCHOOL CHRIS FORTUNATO

Sam’s announcements at School Meeting are iconic: Low-voiced and barely audible, he counsels students on academic integrity or instructs them in their response to an emergency situation. They take in every word, which is not easy to achieve with an adolescent audience. For a few years, he came up on stage prior to the Hun football game and said if we won, he would squeeze into his old Hun football jersey on the following Monday. The kids loved it.

Sam really gets kids, he knows how to talk to them so they will listen, and there’s no substitute for experience. He’s seen effectively every possible situation that can arise with a student and intuitively knows the response that will yield the best results. As an English teacher, he is beloved, and his students are universal in their affection and praise.

—ASSOCIATE HEAD OF SCHOOL
RYAN PAGOTTO ’97

What I will miss most about Sam is the great depth and breadth of his wisdom...his uncanny ability to float literary allusions at just the right moment...and his unwavering support. He has been an invaluable mentor, friend and colleague.

—ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL FOR ACADEMICS & DEAN OF FACULTY RACHEL STONE
Mr. Bacon goes above and beyond for his students. He was my freshman English teacher, but I’m a senior now, and he still checks in on me. To this day, I know I can go to him if I have a problem in school, need an essay reviewed or really anything for that matter. Mr. Bacon has so much experience teaching English that he’s mastered the art of presenting the subject matter to freshmen with a 15-minute attention span. My favorite classroom memory of him involves vocab lessons, where he used mnemonic devices to teach different words. For idiosyncrasies, Mr. Bacon began rubbing toilet paper on his face, giving the class an example of a peculiar habit. My Blair experience would have been completely different had I not been in his English class four years ago. Mr. Bacon is an amazing teacher, mentor and inspiration.

—LUCY DRINKWATER ’15

Sam will be sorely missed by the English department and by this colleague in particular. No administrative meeting will ever be the same without one of Sam’s arcane literary allusions or quotations—without his leadership, we’re doomed to go about goring one another’s oxen. He is legendary for his flexible and creative approach to scheduling, course development and teaching; his wonderful sense of humour and droll asides; his concern for students; and his perspective and ability to cut to the chase. This is a line from a student evaluation of Sam from a few years ago: ‘He’s really intimidating because he knows EVERYTHING!’

—ENCELALIS DEPARTMENT CHAIR BOB BRANDWOOD

From the beginning, Sam distinguished himself as dean of academics in several ways: problem management (brilliant); insightful leadership (incisive); and student-centered (always). While fully consumed with his leadership of academics, Sam never lost his love for the classroom, for handling dormitory duty and even for the occasional coaching stint. He was always willing to step up and meet the School’s many needs, in that way leading by his sterling example.

Further, Sam was especially impressive in considering plans for out-of-the-box but necessary projects—grading, calendar, curriculum, anything—usually pointing out all the significant complications and his reservations, making his prudent case. Then, when he lost a battle (not too often), Sam faithfully headed off to resolve all the complexities and then enthusiastically promote the new plan. And, in that way and through his impact, the School got better.

Sam Bacon is an illustrious educational leader, fully appreciating school-mastering at its fundamental best.

—FORMER HEADMASTER CHAN HARDWICK

Sam is dedicated to working with students and faculty. As a friend and mentor, he has always been a generous advisor. I have admired Sam for his wisdom and never-ending support of Blair students. No matter what the issue, he can find a resolution that is in the best interest of the kids and the community at large.

—DEAN OF STUDENTS CARM MAZZA

Sam’s dedication, hard work and allegiance to the School have been exceptional, and his list of accomplishments will be remembered for years to come. Congratulations to Sam on a job well done.

—FORMER ASSISTANT TO THE DEAN OF ACADEMICS MARION CLIFFORD
Don’t be sorry, be smart. That pithy piece of advice was given to me—and a couple thousand other high school students over the years—by Sam Bacon. It may sound glib or even obnoxious at first listen, but this clever tidbit has stuck with me for over three decades.

Don’t be sorry, be smart was Sam’s terse reminder to think before you speak, to take a beat before you act. But that doesn’t mean that this advice is only about avoiding mistakes. Turned on its head, it’s a positive push to take chances when opportunities knock, to move outside of your comfort zone, to go for ‘it’—whatever your personal ‘it’ might be. As Sam Bacon surely knows, Don’t be sorry, be smart is far more than an acerbic rejoinder to sentences that start with the words ‘I wish I hadn’t…’ It’s an antidote to sentences that start with the words, ‘If only I had…’ Thanks, Sam.

—AMY BIBER BARR, DWIGHT-ENGLEWOOD ’78

Mr. Bacon is the wisest, most charismatic and best storyteller I have ever met. He is an extraordinary teacher and mentor, in and outside of the classroom, thanks to the thought-provoking questions he poses, as well as his vast base of knowledge. Mr. Bacon has taught me numerous things to use both in English and in life, including two important lessons I will always remember: Never stop asking questions and control the narrative in every situation. Thank you Mr. Bacon, for everything!

—HANNAH CIANCARELLI ’17

The one person who really stood by and checked up on me during the rough patch that was sophomore year was my advisor, Mr. Bacon. He has been incredibly important to me. As a child with an absent father, male figures weren’t easy to trust—but I have never had a problem trusting Mr. Bacon. He has been my Blair dad, my number-one fan, and he is the best thing to happen to me at Blair. Not once did he judge me, and not once did he ever tell me what to do or make a big deal of anything—he just offered advice and sent an email asking how the other “SB” was doing. Mr. Bacon, thank you for being the best advisor a girl could ask for.

—SALLEY BAXTER ’15
Mr. Bacon has told me since my freshman year that we are all doomed to succeed. While this sounds perhaps a bit ominous, rest assured those of you who do not know Mr. Bacon quite as well, this is his way of saying, don’t worry. Don’t worry because we are all smart and capable young adults who are going great places. Don’t worry, because we are all going to be just fine. As an eager (and perhaps overachieving) freshman sitting in his English 1 class, staring up at a stately Selden Bacon, this was perhaps initially a difficult concept to grasp, but I think I am finally beginning to understand what he meant.

—HANNAH DECLERCQ ’12 (EXCERPTED FROM HER VALEDICTORY ADDRESS)

What made my dear friend and advisor Sam Bacon a great teacher was his insistence on teaching character first and academics thereafter. Sam not only had a heightened awareness of the importance of developing reasoning skills within young adults, but he also possessed the unique and rare ability to do so. Like any remarkable teacher, Sam knew that by treating a young adult as a rational entity with the use of respect and habitual serious discourse, he or she would eventually become one. Thank you, Sam, for your remarkable impact on the lives of many, including my own.

—ASHLEY THOMPSON ’08

My good friend and colleague Sam Bacon has been a significant influence in leading Blair forward during his 25 years of service. He is a level-headed and calm fellow, who is clearly dedicated to working with kids, instilling in them a lifelong commitment to honesty, genuine concern for others and a commitment to do their very best in all their work. Sam listens carefully to those who present different ideas, gathering all the facts of a situation before making decisions. He does not jump to conclusions or make unfair judgments. These qualities, combined with his quick wit and ready sense of humor, have earned him the complete respect and admiration of faculty, students and staff.

—RETIRED SCIENCE DEPARTMENT CHAIR RICK CLARKE

During my first year at Blair, I struggled a lot. If it weren’t for Mr. Bacon’s intervention, I don’t think I would have made it to graduation. He played an integral role in helping uncover and treat a lifelong learning disability. With his unique brand of tough love, he kept me on track, saw to it that I graduated, and laid the foundation for a successful collegiate and professional career.

Mr. Bacon is gifted at recognizing a student’s true potential and bringing it out. He’ll push you because he knows you are capable of more. And, in the end, you’ll thank him for it. For many students like me, Mr. Bacon holds a special place in our hearts. He is a great teacher, role model, mentor and friend.

—RYAN CODY ’02

Sam is a gifted academic leader. He is gifted at helping students study and learn productively, helping them set priorities and find balance, and most importantly, helping them to put their academic life in a context of values, such as discipline, responsibility and honesty. Sam is the heart of teaching and learning at Blair. Over 24 years, I sent more students and parents to talk to Sam than any other adult at the School. He is a superb problem solver. He listens to students and unravels the complex issues related to their strengths and challenges, college and parental expectations, and the relationships they have with individual teachers. He has a way of discovering what matters most and constructing solutions that make it possible for students to succeed. While he understands and respects Blair’s larger educational mission, he never loses sight of the individual. His values, judgment and care are manifest today in every Blair classroom.

—FORMER DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT MONIE HARDWICK
Blair expands its networking program with mentor-mentee matches across the United States

Jonathan Slawson ’05 helped fellow Blair alum Morgan Klein ’13 land her first internship at Carnegie Hall’s administrative offices last summer.
When it comes to building your professional skills and convincing an employer to hire you, who you know can be just as important as what you know, especially for students still in college or recent graduates with little experience outside the classroom. That’s why Blair launched a program last year to foster and streamline the relationships its alumni have been forging for years by making it easier for those in specific fields and industries to connect.

With Director of Alumni Relations Jenny Maine at the helm, the Blair networking program has already grown by leaps and bounds since its 2013 inception. Hundreds of experienced alumni have offered to share their expertise and mentor younger graduates in some form or fashion, whether that means creating an official internship, arranging for less formal networking opportunities, passing along resumes to colleagues or simply offering advice about navigating the ins and outs of a specific profession.

“One of the reasons our networking program has been so popular is that there isn’t one model of what mentorship should look like,” said Jenny. “We really want our more experienced alums to help the students and graduates eager to benefit from their experience in ways they think best. Of course, the ultimate goal of creating industry-specific matches is to help those at the beginning of their careers find internships or full-time jobs in their profession of choice. But we have been careful not to limit our focus to specific positions because there is such value in approaching mentorship from a more global perspective. Getting advice from someone who has already climbed the ladder when you are on the bottom rung can be priceless.”

To date, Blair has paired dozens of young graduates with mentors in cities across the United States, and the School continues to look for ways to grow the program. In February, for example, the annual Young Alumni Reception in New York City, which has been hosted by Blair Trustee Jim Krugman ’65 and his wife, Connie, for more than a decade, included a new twist: Over cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, attendees had the opportunity to network with fellow Blair alumni who have forged success in seven different professions.

“For years, the Krugmans have been incredibly supportive of our young alumni, so incorporating a tangible networking element into the traditional program was a natural fit and led to some great conversations and connections,” said Jenny, who identified key areas of interest and willing alumni mentors before the event with the help of Trustee Emmanuel Bello ’04 (for more about the reception, please turn to page 132).

Looking forward, Jenny and her colleagues hope to introduce more opportunities like this, giving the networking program a public face and getting the word out to those interested in participating. Of course, the best way to illustrate the program’s value as it continues to develop and evolve is to hear directly from a few of the mentor-mentee matches grateful to have been paired. In the pages that follow, Blair graduates from the classes of 1958 to 2013 talk about why they chose to become involved—and why you should, too.

If you haven’t already joined the network, sign up today by visiting Blair’s website.

www.blair.edu/networking
As many college students and recent graduates know firsthand, the hardest part about getting a job or even an internship can be earning the experience necessary for an employer to hire you. “The challenge young people are confronted with is: How do I get that experience if no one is willing to take a chance on me?” said Morgan Klein ’13, a student at Bucknell University who is finishing up her sophomore year at American University in Washington, D.C., as part of a semester-long international relations exchange program.

Enter Blair’s Director of Alumni Relations Jenny Maine, who matched Morgan with fellow alumnus Jonathan Slawson ’05 for a four-month internship at Carnegie Hall in New York City, where Jonathan serves as manager of the Notables, the legendary Hall’s young-member program for music enthusiasts in their 20s and 30s.

“Classroom knowledge is great, but real-world experience is priceless,” said Jonathan. “My success in the field of fundraising and donor relations has largely been due to the mentorship of several former colleagues, many of whom still look after my professional and personal growth. I’m grateful to have such a strong network of support, and I pay it forward at every turn. Participating in Blair’s networking program was a very easy way to do just that.”

From May to August 2014, Morgan and Jonathan met once a week at Carnegie Hall’s administrative offices at the corner of 57th Street and 7th Avenue, located a couple of blocks from Central Park. Morgan quickly learned the ropes of working in a large office, performing basic administrative tasks, assisting “on the front lines” with event management and supporting the development staff behind the scenes by updating the Hall’s donor-management database.

“Some days were a lot of filing—and I mean a lot!—but as I worked, I found myself getting more efficient and finishing the more mundane tasks like stuffing envelopes in time to start on
more in-depth projects,” Morgan said. “Jonathan told me when he hired me that some days were going to be a lot more exciting than others, and that if I read each paper I filed and took note of who had donated what amount, I would start to catch on. I took his advice and found myself learning more about general office operations and Carnegie Hall than I ever imagined I would.”

In fact, it was Jonathan’s advice on her first day as an intern that ended up being Morgan’s biggest takeaway from the experience. “He told me to treat everything as an opportunity to learn, not to wait for people to come to me, but to seek out the experience I wanted and to ask thoughtful questions,” she said.

Impressed by her work ethic, positive attitude and proactive anticipation of the team’s needs, Carnegie Hall’s individual giving staff was thrilled with Morgan’s performance.

“Attitude is everything,” Jonathan said. “Any employer can provide you with the necessary tools to be successful in your day-to-day work, but they can’t teach you to be genuine and fun to be around. A successful intern—like Morgan, who nailed it—has a hunger to learn and an attitude that makes it fun for everyone.”

Adding that job seekers should never underestimate the value of informational interviews, Jonathan urges fellow Blair graduates to actively seek the experiences they want. “By the time a job is posted, there are at least 50 resumes from internal candidates and referrals ahead of you,” he said. “Don’t wait for them to come to you! And remember that you never know where networking will lead, even when there is not a specific job on the table.”

As for encouraging other Blair alumni to become involved in the networking program, Jonathan puts it simply: “Just do it. It is a small way of saying ‘thank you’ to Blair, and a great way to pay it forward.”

Morgan agrees wholeheartedly. “Blair’s networking program is great because it puts you in contact with potential employers who know Blair and who understand that your Blair education makes you worth taking a chance on,” she said. “I learned a lot and came away from my first internship with invaluable professional experience and a new confidence about myself and my work that will help me in all of my future endeavors.”

And to potential job seekers, she offers this advice: “There is a Jonathan out there at a Carnegie Hall who is just waiting for you to apply to intern with him. Trust me, you will only regret it if you don’t do it.”
Getting a Foot in the Door in Public Policy & International Relations

Over the course of his 36 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, eight additional years at the State Department and four years at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), Ambassador Steve Steiner ’58 has worn many hats: His work has ranged from promoting democracy and negotiating nuclear-arms treaties during the Cold War to advocating for women’s issues and human rights in the post-9/11 era.

Two constants throughout his distinguished career have been his focus on making the world a safer place and acting as a mentor to young professionals trying to “crack the very difficult-to-enter field of international relations.”

Asked why he volunteered to be paired with Patrick Maillet ’10, a recent University of Michigan graduate who majored in public policy, as part of Blair’s alumni networking program, Ambassador Steiner said: “I think it is important to leave the world a little better than we found it, and one way I am doing that is by helping to guide the next generation. We owe it to the young generation to try to help them get their foot in the door.”

As Pat learned when the two met for coffee in Washington, D.C., last spring, much of the advice and perspective Ambassador Steiner offers isn’t formal; for example, he talked about the best ways to navigate the government and civil society of Washington, D.C., expressed his willingness to pass along Pat’s resume to colleagues, and spoke about the importance of networking and remaining open to new opportunities.

“When we sat down together, Ambassador Steiner didn’t have a specific job in mind, but gave me what I would call ‘life mentoring,’” said Pat, who lives in Arlington, Virginia, and works at Lockridge Grindal Nauen, a Washington, D.C., government-relations firm as he considers professional opportunities that would allow him to combine his love of international relations with public policy. “When Jenny Maine set up our meeting, she really planted a seed for the long term. I know that Ambassador Steiner will be an incredible resource on whom I can rely not only for career advice but for guidance in life planning: When should I go back to graduate school? Is law school a good idea? Having this connection is great, because the further I get from college, the more I realize that it is all about who you know.”
Since moving from Michigan to Washington, D.C., last year, Patrick has realized that this is especially true in our nation’s capital. “I learned really quickly that public policy jobs open up suddenly and get filled immediately,” Pat continued. “Having a resource like Ambassador Steiner will help me network and establish connections that I can take advantage of so that I am prepared to move quickly when something does fall in my lap.”

Ambassador Steiner’s mentorship of Pat is an example of the different kinds of guidance Blair alumni are offering recent graduates. Mentors don’t have to be in the position to offer their matches a job, but instead can provide perspective and advice. Ambassador Steiner, for example, is a big fan of setting up “informational interviews”—meetings at which there is not a specific position to discuss, but that give job seekers the chance to meet people in the field, make contacts and, hopefully, be considered for future openings.

“These kinds of meetings take the pressure off both parties and can lead to really interesting and unexpected opportunities,” said Ambassador Steiner. “In fact, that is one piece of advice I would offer anyone considering a career in foreign service, public policy and international relations: Be flexible, expect surprises and be open to new opportunities. Look at my own career; I would have never thought I’d be focused on gender issues, but here I am, doing what I can to get men in developing countries to support women’s rights—because there can be no democracy if half the population is not empowered.”

Over the years, Ambassador Steiner has unofficially mentored a number of Blair graduates, happy to share the wisdom he has gained over five decades in the business. “I am a loyal alumnus because Blair gave me a great start in terms of getting into a good college and heading in the right direction,” he said. “I love giving back and helping students as they consider this field or just answering their questions about the experiences I have had over the course of my career.”

Pat looks forward to doing just that when he meets with Ambassador Steiner again later this year. “My perspective has definitely changed in my transition from college to real life in that I realize that networking doesn’t always yield immediate results,” Pat said. “I want to meet as many people as I can, knowing that this will increase the likelihood of my finding a great fit, whether it be working at a think tank, government agency or for an elected official.”

And Pat echoes the Ambassador’s sentiments about mentorship only getting you part of the way to your goals. “Once you get your foot in the door, it is up to you to show what you are worth,” said Ambassador Steiner. Pat agreed: “You can only prove yourself after you’ve gotten the job, and I am excited that the Ambassador is taking the time to help me do that.”
If anyone knows about the importance of connections and relationships when it comes to advancing your career, it is Robert Weiner '65. For the last 40 years, he has specialized in strategic public affairs and media relations in Washington, D.C., working in the White House and on Capitol Hill with elected officials and representatives of national political and issue organizations as senior White House staff and chief of staff of congressional committees. Today, in addition to serving as a White House and Congress reporter and a National Press Club newsmakers coordinator, he also advocates for clients of his firm, Robert Weiner Associates.

Given that Bob traces his career in politics back to his time at Blair, fondly recalling mock political conventions and the lessons imparted by the “legendary” history department chair Paul White, it is no surprise that he quickly volunteered to help Bill Klein '11, a Georgetown University senior majoring in English and classics, when he learned about Blair’s networking program last year.

“Blair meant so much to me, and if I can help to build on what the School has already done for our alumni by teaching them specific skills they will need as young professionals, I am happy to do it,” said Bob.

In Bill’s case, that meant learning to co-author persuasive op-eds as an economic policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and as an intern at the National Press Club. This winter, he wrote two pieces: one on torture that focused on the CIA report released in December 2014 and the 2004 Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse; the other on youth advocacy and involvement, comparing Bob’s class-of-1965 era with his own class-of-2011 timeframe.

“These are really interesting topics about which there has been much national and international discussion, but the most energizing thing is that the conversation is far from finished,” said Bill. “I felt like I was participating in something important and ongoing.”

Even just a month into his internship, Bill could see how, with Bob’s guidance, his writing became more streamlined, punchier and more directed. “This internship made me more confident in expressing my ideas and making them public,” he said. “With Bob’s help, I am proud to have produced op-eds that are persuasive and impactful, and I developed my political savvy and analytical ability. Having had little experience outside of the classroom, I am grateful to Bob for giving me the opportunity.
to take part in the national discourse on some important topics, while learning to write at a more sophisticated level.”

With so many other things on his plate, it is impressive that Bob found the time to go over Bill’s op-ed drafts so carefully. A frequent media commentator and credentialed White House reporter, Bob is constantly on the move, always working to refine, sharpen and enhance his clients’ messaging, whether in the form of nationally syndicated op-eds, TV and radio segments where he’s an analyst/commentator, or speeches.

The fact that Bob has seen the political process from every angle made his mentorship that much more powerful. Before founding his own firm in 2001, Bob worked for the Barry McCaffrey/Lee Brown drug czar’s public affairs office under President Clinton and has served a number of political figures, including John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Ed Koch, Claude Pepper and Ted Kennedy. As director of the press briefing room or general press room at the last seven Democratic National Conventions, he has enjoyed a front-row view of how the media covers national politics, a valuable perspective that helps him keep his firm’s op-ed acceptance rate at 99 percent.

This winter, he dedicated Thursday and Friday mornings to sitting with Bill and his three other interns at the Truman Piano Table on the National Press Club’s top floor, where they collaborated and strategized about op-ed content and framing. “As a mentor, the experience of working with these kids is as meaningful for me as it is to them,” said Bob. “The best advice I can give them is to be enthusiastic about taking part in the political process. There is no excuse for cynicism; if you are cynical, then it is your responsibility to make things better from the inside out.”

It is safe to say that Bill knows just how uncommon an internship like this is for a college senior. “Most of the internship opportunities I see are remote or electronic, so actually dressing professionally and going to the National Press Club to work was a pretty special experience,” he said. “While politics don’t happen here, they are being framed here, and I feel privileged to have been immersed in this world.”

That two Blair alumni who graduated 46 years apart have forged such a successful collaboration is evidence of how strong Blair ties can be. Having decided to use their “common heritage” to make their work together on Capitol Hill more meaningful, Bob and Bill are also planning an intergenerational forum for Alumni Weekend 2015. Bob, who is celebrating his 50th reunion, will speak about youth activism and the political landscape of the 1960s, while Bill, who is celebrating his fourth reunion, will speak about two of the most pressing and prevalent issues for young people in 2015: the cost of a college education and jobs.

“Our alma mater brought us together, but our joint collaboration is much more than a transaction,” said Bill. “We are creating something important and unique, and something that I hope the extended Blair family will model.”
With Blair Academy’s roots firmly planted in the Presbyterian Church, religious studies and worship have been integral to School life since 1848. Whether students participated in religious activities daily (yes, daily!) or less frequently depends on when they were here, as religious instruction and observance have varied substantially through the years (see sidebar on page 33).

Weekly Opportunities to Reflect
In Blair’s modern era, as our community has diversified religiously, daily worship has been abandoned in favor of two weekly events: Thursday Chapel assemblies requiring the attendance of all students and faculty, and the Sunday evening Vespers service.

I came to Blair nine years ago, and at that time, each Chapel opened with a moment of silence followed by a prayer. The chaplain spoke monthly, as did the Headmaster.

On other Thursdays, a faculty member or student would address the community with a spiritual life lesson he or she wanted to share.

Public Speaking in the Spotlight
Three years ago, the School strengthened its commitment to public speaking throughout the curriculum. English teachers, theatre teachers and I served on a planning committee to assess how our faculty taught and modeled public speaking in the classroom. We participated in workshops and devised checklists to assess good public speaking and provide feedback to our students. This was all done on top of the English department’s traditional one-trimester emphasis on public speaking during senior year.

As we expanded opportunities for sophomores and seniors to speak in year-end contests and through Poetry Out Loud competitions, more and more students felt confident enough to ask to speak at Chapel on Thursdays. This surprised me.
Our students now had checklists in hand and in their minds by which to assess good versus bad public speaking. I thought none of them would risk speaking at Chapel.

But Bucs love a challenge. Two summers ago, for the first time, I received emails from students asking me if they might speak at Chapel in the fall. This past summer, I received 16 such requests.

**Leaders & Character Educators**

The chaplain and Head of School now speak at Chapel only once or twice a semester, and fewer faculty members deliver the address. Our emphasis on public speaking and leadership has led student speakers and organizations to embrace the opportunity to present their slices of wisdom to our community—and we have not been disappointed. Over the past two to three years, students, who work closely with an English teacher to edit their speech and with theatre teacher Micki McMillan to rehearse their delivery, have been some of the finest speakers in our entire Chapel program. The communications office now regularly covers their addresses on the website and in this magazine. There is even a Chapel video archive on Blair’s Vimeo channel, which allows all members of the Blair community to witness our students’ thoughtful and powerful speeches.

We’ve come a long way. Our students are learning how to be leaders and character educators, and Chapel has evolved from daily worship led by the chaplain to a communal experience where diverse voices and experiences are shared: Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and secular students, Americans and international students, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Our Head of School, the chaplain and faculty members also share their stories, but they’d better be as good as our student speakers, as the crowd knows a good from a mediocre speech!

**During the first half of the 2014-2015 school year, Blair students shared life experience and words of wisdom in six Chapels. To view videos of select Chapels, please visit the Blair website.**

www.blair.edu/vimeo

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**Sophie Shoemake ’15**

**‘LOOK BEYOND LABELS’**

In her poignant Chapel speech, Sophie Shoemake ’15 shared a college-application essay question she recently came across: “Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, etc. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your label within it.” Why, she wondered, would I want to put a label on myself?

The Blair senior is well aware that when we label or categorize people because of a situation they are going through, or because of the clothes they wear or because of their choice of friends, we can obscure who they are on the inside. It is much better, she told her fellow students, “to talk to people, to ask them questions and to get to know them for who they are.”

Through her involvement with a non-profit organization called To Write Love on Her Arms, Sophie learned that moving beyond labels and talking to people kindly and acceptingly is especially important for teens dealing with mental health issues. “Give them support because you don’t know their story,” she said. “Let them know they have a friend to lean on.”

**Chris Bottone ’16 & Trang Duong ’16**

**‘TRY NEW EXPERIENCES’**

Trang Duong ’16 is an international boarding student from Vietnam. Chris Bottone ’16 is a day student from Andover, New Jersey. Coming to Blair was an enormous leap of faith for both of them, and the classmates from opposite sides of the globe spoke on a common theme: Don’t be afraid to try something new. Having persevered through moments of awkwardness and fear of the unknown, Trang and Chris shared advice about how to successfully navigate a new situation.

Trang learned to trust the advice of people who cared about her, including her Locke Hall housemaster, Chinese teacher Dave Facciani, and her prefects. She also forced herself to step out of her comfort zone and try squash, crew and ceramics. “Every day at Blair is a new adventure for me in both academics and social skills,” she said, but in trying new things, she has grown much more comfortable. “If I can do it, of course, you can!” she concluded.

Chris told his fellow students that whenever they are facing a decision about trying something new, it is good to weigh the pros and cons, but, ultimately, it’s up to them to decide and then make the most of their situation. “The awkwardness of being the new kid is good practice for a lot of experiences in life,” he advised. “If you just settle for where you are, you’ll never know where you can go!”
Will Pemberton ’16
‘OUR FAITH WILL LEAD US TO OUR PURPOSE’
Will Pemberton ’16, a varsity squash player, Blair Academy Player, member of Christian Fellowship and true “Buccaneer at heart,” delivered a powerful address to a rapt audience of faculty and students, sharing his belief that passionate faith will lead each of us to our true purpose in life.

“There is a purpose within each and every person in this room, despite whatever makes us different from one another,” Will declared with charismatic style. He compared that purpose to a door that each of us knocks on throughout our lives. The key to unlocking the door is to have faith in something greater than yourself and to trust that when you act on the beliefs you hold deep in your heart, you will arrive at your destiny, the place where you are supposed to be.

Will’s mother and grandmother have been role models of Christian faith in his life, and his Christian beliefs have guided his actions. “This Chapel is a testament to my life,” he said. “I could have gone to a high school much closer to home, but I came to Blair because I believe in my heart it’s the place I’m supposed to be. Even when everything doesn’t go my way, I hold on to my faith in God and know that everything is leading me to my true purpose.”

Bobby Tanakulthon ’17
‘ACCEPT THE HELP YOU NEED’
Bobby Tanakulthon ’17 expressed gratitude to many people in his Chapel speech: his roommate and prefects, his advisor, the teachers who guided his Chapel preparation, and his heroes and role models from Cardigan Mountain School, Headmaster McCusker, his advisor, Mr. Good, and the late Coach Marrion. The reason for Bobby’s thankfulness was that each of these people offered to help him when he needed it most. “If you are offered help, take it,” he urged students and faculty. “Don’t shove it aside.”

At the same time, Bobby encouraged everyone to be aware of the feelings of people around them. “We have a big community here; we are a band of brothers and sisters,” he said. “I want you to offer help to people who need it. And if anyone needs help and comes to you, don’t ignore them; the fact that they have come to you means you are important in their life, and they would like your opinion and help.”

Salley Baxter ’15
‘GIVE YOURSELF SUCCESS’
“Give yourself success.” Salley Baxter ’15 confidently voiced her great-grandmother’s advice, and in a heartfelt
speech, she explained how this nugget of wisdom has helped her navigate her years at Blair.

Salley came to Blair from New York City, and even though she had always loved school, she experienced a number of challenges as she adjusted to boarding-school life and expectations. At Chapel, she described how a conversation with her housemaster, language department chair Tim Devaney, helped her see that she had not been following her great-grandmother’s advice.

To “give yourself success,” you must define success on your own terms. “It’s the little things that matter on your journey through Blair,” Salley said. “You can’t get caught up in grades and how people perceive you all the time. Remember to focus on yourself and your happiness. Accept that your success isn’t defined by others; it’s defined by you.”

Sanjay Paul ’16

‘WE ARE IDEALISTS’

Sanjay Paul ’16 strives every day to bring out the best in himself and others for this reason: If we hope to bring an end to the cycle of conflict that sometimes seems to envelop the entire world, we all need to be our best selves. At the same time, we must believe that our actions can positively impact the future.

Before his freshman year at Blair, Sanjay was of the mindset that while it is good to try to make people happy, it doesn’t much matter what you do because there is no “right direction” for the world. However, his Blair experience has caused a major shift in perspective. At School, he has worked harder than he ever knew was possible and as a result has realized success in classes, in athletics and in other aspects of day-to-day life. He has become an idealist, and he believes in the greater good.

Sanjay concluded his Chapel with stirring advice for his peers: “In your darkest moments, when life seems to close in on you and it becomes hard to breathe, remember who you are. Remember what you have strived to be, remember where you started and how far you have come, but most importantly, remember what there still is to do. We are the new generation, we are hard workers, we are works in progress, we are naïve, we are idealists, but most of all, we are the future, so let’s not make the future something to fear, but make the future something that drives us forward.”

Notes on Chapel & Worship at Blair Through the Years

For about the first 100 years of Blair’s history, the minister of the Blairstown First Presbyterian Church served as the School’s chaplain, and students attended Sunday services at the church. In Blair Academy: A Sesquicentennial History, Arthur Hamlin describes some of the many iterations of the School’s religious practices. For example, in the 1850s, daily prayers followed students’ 6 a.m. breakfast, and Sundays were devoted entirely to worship; in the 1940s, in addition to Sunday morning church services, boys attended on-campus Chapel services on Sunday evening and weekdays; and for many years, Vespers services, comprising mostly singing, were a weekly occurrence.

In 1956, after much discussion, Headmaster James Howard and Blair’s newly appointed chaplain, the Rev. Foster Q. Doan, eliminated the practice of mandatory attendance at Sunday morning services at the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Doan, whose official title was School Minister, was both a preacher and a teacher. He taught the first few religion offerings in Blair’s curriculum and held daily and Sunday Chapel services in Memorial Hall (now Timken Library). Headmaster Howard, himself the child of a Presbyterian minister, was wholly supportive of these changes, writing that Sunday church services “served principally to antagonize boys and to preclude their responsiveness to religious life at school,” but praising Chapel as “that function in Blair’s routine where school spirit seeks its highest and finest level.”
Wayne Rasmussen, a.k.a. “Razz,” has a lot of Blair stories. And he should, since he is currently the School’s Senior Master—that is, the longest-serving member of the faculty. Hired by Headmaster James Kelley in 1976, Razz came to Blair fresh out of Bates College with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry. He wasn’t sure at the time that a teaching career was what he wanted, but becoming Blair’s sole chemistry teacher (and default chemistry department head) was a good opportunity, while the Blairstown terrain reminded him of the beautiful Berkshire Mountains, not far from his Worcester, Massachusetts, home.

In 1979, Razz left Blair for a job with Essex Chemical Corporation in Staten Island, New York. A year later, he was back at the School to stay, having realized that life as a teacher suited him better than life in the corporate world for several reasons: He liked working with people, he could live in the country, he had summers off to pursue personal interests and the job offered plenty of variety.

Razz says that he “likes to do a lot of different things,” and when you consider the many aspects of School life he’s been involved in over the years, you realize this is not an understatement: He has taught chemistry and math; he coached football for 15 years; he is the technical director for Blair’s theatre program, building sets, designing lighting and overseeing the student technical crew for each of the School’s five annual productions; he films football games; and he coordinates every detail of Blair’s annual British golf exchange. Outside school, Razz’s life is even more interesting, as he has built houses, studied stagecraft and ridden his motorcycle cross-country multiple times.

Read on to learn more about this multifaceted, multitalented teacher who has touched the lives of thousands of Blair students in his 38 years at the School and who, as Senior Master, will once again line up the faculty and lead the procession at Commencement in May.

Q. Why did you choose chemistry as your college major?

A. In high school, we were allowed to take one AP course senior year. I chose biology. When I arrived at Bates, I attended a biology majors meeting during orientation, and the advice was to take chemistry early and get it out of the way. I took general chemistry in my freshman year, and it was the first subject that I really liked—much more interesting than the chemistry course I had taken in high school. I loved the labs and never took another biology course.

Q. You’re a great electrician, carpenter and mechanic. How did you develop those skills?

A. Soon after I was married in 1984, I begged Tom Schroll, a local builder and mutual friend of former science department chair Rick Clarke and Dennis Peachey ’62, to
Outside the CLASSROOM

Razz leads the 2014 graduation procession as the School’s “Senior Master,” the longest-serving member of the faculty.

hire me as a carpenter for summer employment. Tom took a chance and hired a teacher; the other guys on the crew didn’t think I’d be able to read a tape measure! Since Tom built homes from start to finish, I learned all aspects of carpentry—framing, siding and finish carpentry. I also learned about masonry, insulation, sheet rock and spackling, painting, and roofing. If work was slow, we did it all rather than hiring subcontractors. We didn’t do plumbing, HVAC or electrical work, but I watched those who did to learn as much as I could without actually doing the work. I practiced those skills when my wife, Linda, and I bought a small house in Maine several years ago. Working with Tom, I was on the crew that rebuilt Carriage House and erected Marcial House on the site of the Blair Mansion. Linda and I now live in Marcial House!

My stagecraft skills began in a course at Bates but were honed at the Muhlenberg Summer Music Theater, where I worked for parts of three summers. Reading stagecraft and lighting books and publications has helped, but working with trained professionals I have met over the years has been a challenging and rewarding experience. Four people come to mind: Allen “Doc” Nagle, a sound designer I met at Dave Phillips Sound; Brad Steward, a jack-of-all-trades I met in a sacred music group; Curtis Dretsch, a set designer at Muhlenberg; and Steve Shull, a sound designer at Masque Sound. Masque is a company owned by Geoff Shearing ‘89’s family.

Q. Which Blair production set was the most challenging to build? Which one did you enjoy working on the most?

A. The most challenging was the 42nd Street set, simply because of the quantity of scenery necessary for the show and the dilemma of where to put it all when it wasn’t onstage. The two productions I enjoyed working on the most were Anything Goes and Urinetown. Both had great casts and talented crews. I’d have to give the nod to Anything Goes, though. It was great fun to mount any musical in old Memorial Hall due to the limitations of the space. I still walk on the former stage in Timken Library from time to time and reminisce about all the productions we did in that space.

Q. What do you think students gain from being on tech crew for a production?

A. Most of the students on tech crew have had little experience with the use of hand tools, and they are exposed to skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. The other major benefit of being part of a tech crew is the teamwork necessary to mount and run a production. Everything tech does is with the intent of presenting the best possible product, but the individuals are never seen and rarely receive recognition. It’s much like being an offensive lineman on a
Outside the CLASSROOM

football team. Without that line, no team can be successful, but nobody ever knows who the offensive linemen are. Tech has to be committed to being anonymous in the darkness, but they are as important as any actor whose talents are recognized in the light.

**Q. What is the biggest technical issue you’ve had during a Blair production, and how did you solve it?**

**A.** In 42nd Street, we had an 8’x16’ two-story wagon that had a cocktail bar on the first level and a bedroom on the second level. It was stored in the shop when not onstage, but getting in and out of the shop requires passing over a rather difficult threshold. On opening night, one of the casters under the wagon collapsed, stranding the unit partway through the doorway. During intermission, I cut a square of the floor to remove the damaged caster so we could clear the stage for the second act. Fortunately, the wagon wasn’t used in the second act. It took a few hours to repair the unit for the Friday performance, with assistance from Brian Kathenes, a Hope resident who is a good friend and one of Blair theatre’s biggest fans.

**Q. What is the best trip you’ve taken on your motorcycle?**

**A.** In 2001, following the purchase of a Honda ST1100, I embarked on a four-week, 12,000-mile tour around the United States. I had always wanted to drive across the country and see many of the national parks. The trip included visiting family in North Carolina, friends in Missouri, Derek Peachey ’93 and Steve Shull in Texas, Pike’s Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, southwestern Utah and Yosemite. Linda met me in San Francisco, and we rode up the Pacific Coast Highway to Portland, Oregon, and Mt. Hood. After Linda flew home from Portland, I visited with former faculty member Win and Lois Ewing on Whidbey Island and traveled through British Columbia, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming to visit Yellowstone, my favorite national park. Turning for home, I rode through Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Black Hills before visiting former faculty member Dan Hazen and his wife, Karen, in Michigan and my best friend, Phil Kokotailo, and his wife, Sally Stevens, at the University School in Ohio before finally returning to Blairstown.

**Q. You also owned a Jaguar and an Airstream trailer?**

**A.** I owned a 1958 MGA before selling it to buy the 1966 Jaguar E-type. There are just so many cars that need to be rescued! It was great fun owning pieces of automotive history, but I’ve sworn off car restoration to concentrate on the house in Maine and the trailer. The Airstream is an American icon with art deco styling my wife and I love. Still a work-in-progress, the Airstream is likely to be a retirement home for a few months out of the year.

**Q. Tell me about Blair’s British golf exchange. What have you enjoyed most about coordinating this event?**

**A.** The exchange was begun by Blair parent Bob Castle, father of Mike Castle ’70 and grandfather of Ben Castle ’15, in 1968. Every year, seven or eight students alternately visit England and America. I first went on the tour with former Blair teacher Glenn Whitman in 1996 and was taken by the educational opportunity the exchange afforded. I jumped at the chance to coordinate the tour.

(Left to right): Steve Church and Mark Giarraputo from Congressional Country Club join British manager Keven Johnstone and Razz at the 2014 Blair British Golf Exchange.
in 2001. It has been very rewarding to witness many young men benefit from the experience of traveling and playing golf for two to three weeks in a different country and culture. The friendships those young men have formed last a lifetime. I’ve been fortunate to have made friends with several teachers in England, two of whom I count among my best friends.

Q. How do you define “success”?

A. Success is in service. Some of the great teachers at Blair who have modeled this include Ferd Marcial, Charlie Underwood, Win Ewing, Henry Cowan and Rick Clarke. The greatest example of service was that of Jesus, who washed the feet of the disciples to teach them how to find success in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Q. If you could have dinner with anyone, living or deceased, who would it be and why?

A. Winston Churchill. From my rather limited knowledge of history, I think he was the greatest leader of the 20th century. I’ve found many of his quotes to be inspirational, as did the British people who stood against great odds during World War II.

Q. If you won $1 million, what would you do with it?

A. I’d retire! The running joke in my classes concerns the “Rasmussen Retirement Fund” and the potential donations by my students to it. (The fund allows me to talk about investments and interest from the perspective of mathematics.) If I added $1 million to my current savings, I think I could live comfortably for the remainder of my life without touching the principal. The nest egg could then be donated to a needy organization at the end of my life.

Q. What advice would you give a new teacher or someone who was considering a career in teaching?

A. Save as much as you can as early as you can. This isn’t easy, given the debt many accumulate and the high cost of a college education. Once those payments are made, invest as much as possible in the Vanguard Index 500 Fund and watch the magic of compound interest!

Q. What mark do you feel you’ve made on Blair Academy?

A. I was once asked if I’ve ever thought about my legacy, and I have to admit that I haven’t. So much of what we do as teaching faculty is anchored in the present and trying to do the best thing for our students. I hope that my students will look back 10 or more years from now and remember that I tried to do the right thing for them, not necessarily in the present but for the rest of their lives.

Razz on a motorcycle tour with the Long Reach Long Riders, a group of technical theater people who raise money for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Behind the Scenes.
On November 8, one of the coldest days of the fall, Blair’s athletic teams gave their all on the tennis courts, track, and field hockey, football and soccer fields, but the Peddie Falcons won by a score of 8-2-3. The loss broke Blair’s four-year streak of winning the Kelley-Potter Cup, which had been a fixture in Head of School Chris Fortunato’s office in Locke Hall since 2010.

After the varsity football game concluded in the late afternoon, Blair’s Head of School and Peddie’s Headmaster met on Hampshire Field’s 50-yard-line for the Cup ceremony, during which Mr. Fortunato graciously handed the Cup to Peter Quinn.

Though Blair didn’t earn an overall win this year, Peddie Week promoted school spirit and unity across campus at a number of exciting events leading up to Friday night’s traditional pep rally and bonfire, Associate Head of School Ryan Pagotto ’97 said.

“The kids were focused on supporting the teams and their friends, and that’s what we’re all about at Blair,” he continued, noting that there is much more to the celebrated Peddie Day tradition than whether the Bucs win or lose.

That said, looking ahead to Peddie Day 2015, Mr. Pagotto noted Blair students will be hungrier than ever to reclaim the Kelley-Potter Cup: “Peddie came out with a vengeance this year, ready to take back the Cup, and they were successful,” he concluded. “Now we have an even greater appetite to bring the Cup back to its rightful place at Blair.”

— PE DDIE RECLAIMS CUP AS —

Bucs Honor Age-Old TRADITIONS With School Spirit & Sportsmanship
Over the years, linguistic offerings at Blair have evolved in a number of ways. Today, the intense curriculum includes more options than ever for students at all levels of ability; an increasing number of faculty members are polyglots who have extensive experience living overseas and can therefore give students a 360-degree view of linguistics and culture; and, in most language classes, every student signs a pledge to speak only Spanish, French or Chinese for the duration of each class period.

“The goal of such immersion is to enhance learning and make students more comfortable speaking and writing in their language of choice,” said Tim Devaney, who joined Blair’s faculty in 2010 as chair of the language department. “When I first started at Blair, our faculty members had recently introduced such a pledge, having seen how successful it was at Middlebury College. It has since become a hallmark of our collective philosophy as teachers.”

With language classes ranging from levels 1-4 to honors and advanced placement, Blair offers a number of compelling and innovative courses. Among the most popular is “Spanish Conversation and Culture,” a class taught by veteran faculty member Sarah O’Neil that incorporates reading, writing and oral presentations on different Spanish-speaking regions. “This course gives kids who have already taken Spanish 4 or AP Spanish the opportunity to keep exploring language and be creative once they finish their requirements,” noted Mr. Devaney.

Other popular courses this year are Spanish 3 honors, Spanish 4 and Spanish 4 honors, taught by the department’s newest member, Pedro Hurtado Ortiz, a native of Nicaragua who came to Blair in the fall of 2014. “Pedro is proactive about bringing culture into the classroom, introducing and analyzing great poetry and prose from Latin America and Spain, and infusing grammar into his lessons in ways that depart from the textbook,” Mr. Devaney noted. “He expects a lot from his students, as do all of the language faculty, and they respond well to it.”

And while language study is, by nature, interdisciplinary and hands-on, Blair faculty members have become more intentional about planning off-campus excursions that reinforce classroom learning, making the curriculum more experiential.

Of course, in recent years, the rise of School-sponsored trips abroad has helped the language department accomplish this. “Since Head of School Chris Fortunato has made global service travel a priority, our department has seen many more offerings with a service component,” Mr. Devaney said, adding that past destinations have included Spain, Ecuador, Haiti, China, France, Costa Rica and Peru.

Chinese teacher Lian Wang teaches AP and honors Chinese, incorporating karaoke and video into her lessons to make them exciting and interesting.
In March 2015, Mr. Devaney and Mr. Hurtado accompanied students to Nicaragua for the first time. At the end of the school year, language teachers Joyce Lang and Joanna Sprout will likely return to the Sacred Valley of the Incas for a service-oriented immersion in Peruvian culture, a trip they first took in 2014. Later in the summer, former language teacher Leucretia Shaw (now associate dean of admission) will once again introduce students to Costa Rican culture in partnership with the World Leadership School.

“Our offerings have really grown, thanks to our faculty members thinking creatively about ways to expose students to rich cultural experiences,” said Mr. Devaney. “Looking forward, I would love to explore the possibility of students studying abroad for longer periods, though the logistics of putting such a program in place would obviously be difficult.”

As department chair, he is most proud of the relationship-based learning that goes on in Blair’s language classrooms, as well as the “esprit de corps” that exists among the language faculty.

“We all love watching students experience that moment where they finally ‘get it,’” he said. “Very often, I believe, our kids reach that moment because, as teachers, we regularly observe our colleagues in the classroom and share ideas outside of the classroom, inevitably thinking, ‘I want to try that technique or approach.’ We enjoy spreading the wealth to help each other become better at what we do, because that is the best way to ensure our students’ success.”

Language department chair Tim Devaney.
Math Teacher’s ‘Think Tanks’ Are Sessions of Shared Scholarly Exploration

An epic review session for an algebra 2 exam was the genesis of what has become a journey of intellectual discovery for math teacher John Padden and several students. “During that review session, some of my students realized they enjoyed delving deeper into topics we had studied and asked if we could continue over the summer,” Mr. Padden said. “So I offered four sessions, and about a half-dozen kids came to every one.” And while he anticipated in-depth discussions of mathematical theory, intense problem solving and some excitement over potential discoveries, even he was surprised when energetic “think-tank” conversations stretched four or more hours into the evening as he and the students experienced learning “for the sheer joy of it.”

“At every summer session, we dove into some interesting math,” Mr. Padden said, listing set theory, combinatorics, number theory and American Math Competition problems among the topics tackled by the algebra 2-through-calculus students in the group. Sometimes, a think tank would begin with a non-math-related discussion about classical or jazz music or another subject a student raised. Mr. Padden, who holds bachelor’s degrees in mathematics and music, as well as a master’s in education from Rutgers University, was happy to explore any topic. But the problem-solving really brought the group’s energy into focus.

“The amazing part was that everyone in the room drove exploration that emanated from our original problems,” Mr. Padden marveled. “We were equals around the table, and any one of us could make the next move or the next discovery. It was exciting for the kids to realize that I was learning as much as they were.”

Learning in a Whole New Way

The think tanks continued into the fall semester, and Brooke Langevin ’16 was a regular participant. “Think tanks help us learn math and problem solving in a whole new way,” she said. “During the summer, the best feeling was when we found a problem that no individual in the group knew how to solve, but together, with a lot of thought, we were able to figure out not only the problem, but how to approach problems in general. To me, the think tanks aren’t just about math—they are about learning how to think with other people who honestly enjoy learning. Every single time, I leave feeling proud of what we accomplished, full of excitement over what we discovered and just a little bit better at solving problems in general.”

Eric Flora ’15 described think tanks as “the asides you want to have in class, but never have enough time to cover.” He appreciates having the time to delve into complex topics without worrying about the bell ringing or the test on Friday. “We often use formulas in math, but because of their complex derivations, we rarely discuss their origins in class,” he said. “During think tanks, when we create a detailed
explanation of why a formula works, math becomes more about understanding than about memorization.”

For mathematics department chair Latta Browse, the think tanks are a manifestation of the work Mr. Padden has been doing with Blair students since he joined the faculty in 2008: pursuing cool ideas wherever they may lead, “just because.” “His enthusiasm resonates,” Mr. Browse remarked. “Kids are drawn into a world of ideas that they knew existed but never before imagined they could access. Mr. Padden makes it clear that intellectual curiosity is the norm for us as human beings.”

From Math to Music

Igniting students’ intellectual curiosity is certainly one of Mr. Padden’s goals with the think tanks. In October and November, the focus of the meetings turned from math to music as the group prepared for a November 16 trip to Carnegie Hall to hear the Czech Philharmonic perform Dvorak’s 9th Symphony. Ten students congregated in Mr. Padden’s living room for two intense sessions of musical exploration that included a DVD screening of the work, discussion of its underlying music theory and consideration of its historical context. They listened to classical and jazz pieces and compared the musicality of those works and their own reactions to them. Finally, Mr. Padden gave each participant, about half of whom had no prior musical training, a complete score and led what he described as a “modest score study” of the work.

“Our discussion was fluid and fascinating,” Mr. Padden said. “Everyone, freshmen through seniors, those with instrumental training and those without, had something to contribute about the music itself or an emotional response it evoked. The real discovery, though, was found in considering others’ impressions of a work and comparing them to your own. After these sessions, each of us brought so much more to the performance.”

Emily Cort ’16, a junior with little musical experience, and Savannah Doelfel ’18, a freshman who sings and plays the trumpet and French horn, were among the 36 students who made the trip to Carnegie Hall. “The think tanks gave me a strong understanding of the piece and made me even more excited to experience the live performance,” Emily said. “At both the think tanks and the concert, I learned something new while listening to beautiful music. I didn’t need a deep understanding of music. All I needed was an appreciation for the gorgeous music being played in one of the most amazing venues in the world.” Savannah appreciated the opportunity to identify favorite passages prior to the concert and then listen for—and “instantly recognize”—changes made by the Czech Philharmonic during the performance.

Ten-year piano student Yueqi Du ’16 observed that the audience and acoustics of the concert hall created a unique experience that is impossible to replicate on a CD. She enjoyed analyzing the symphony and its score prior to the concert, but beyond the technical aspects of the work, she found that participation in the think tanks gave her a more holistic view of the symphony. “During our sessions, I heard the ideas of my peers who came from different musical backgrounds and had different interpretations of the piece,” she said. “I was also glad to see that so many of my peers share my interest in classical music.”

Mr. Padden noted that one of the greatest benefits of the think tanks has been the group’s shared experience. “While being part of a think tank deepens kids’ knowledge of math concepts or musical composition, it’s the collaboration and sense of awe and wonder at the discoveries we’re making together that drives the experience,” he said. “This is one of the best examples of teamwork I’ve been a part of at Blair.”

Blair students enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of Carnegie Hall.
Blair’s Debate Team Exemplifies the ‘Best Kind of Collegiality’

One of the long-standing benefits of a Blair education is the opportunity to engage, every day, in thoughtful in-class discussion with teachers and peers. At times, discussion elevates to argument, depending on the level of passion an issue incites. However, in recent years, Blair students who are passionate about the art of debate itself had no organized opportunity to hone their skills and test their ability in formal competition. Enter Karthik Reddy ’15 and Teddy Kahn ’15, founders of the School’s two-year-old debate team.

In the Beginning
As a sophomore, Karthik knew he wanted to leave his mark on Blair Academy, but it took a while to figure out how he was going to do it. As he explained in the story he recorded for The Blair Leadership Stories Project (www.blair.edu/karthik-reddy), he loved in-class argument and was intrigued by the idea of engaging further in philosophical debate. He researched opportunities and came across competitive debate, an extracurricular activity at schools nationwide—but not at Blair. Without further ado, Karthik got to work.

His first attempt to establish a debate team did not go as well as he had hoped—in fact, by December of Karthik’s sophomore year, the fledgling activity completely fell apart due to lack of organization. At the start of his junior year, English and theatre teacher Micki Kaplan McMillan encouraged Karthik to give the debate team another try. This time, Karthik and his best friend, Teddy, gave it their all, and the team has had more success in the past year and a half than they ever imagined.

Behind the Scenes
As captains of the debate team, Karthik and Teddy’s responsibilities extend far beyond running weekly Wednesday-evening meetings. They are competitors and coaches, researchers and logistics organizers, marketers, recruiters, and spokesmen. Ms. McMillan serves as the team’s advisor and administrative coordinator, and she proudly noted that Teddy and Karthik have made this a truly student-run organization. “It’s been enriching to work with students who are so self-motivated,” she said. “The debate team is very important to Karthik, Teddy and all of the students involved, and their commitment is at the heart of the team’s success so far.”

Karthik described some of the legwork that went into the establishment of the new campus activity. “Most people had no clue what formal debate involved—quite honestly, we didn’t either. We did a lot of research, used our intuition and built on the speaking skills we use every day in class. Teddy and I learned along with the team, and we’ve documented all our findings. Plus, we worked so, so hard to get campus-wide exposure for the activity and to really build the team.”

Debate at Skeptics
This past fall, the debate team showcased its skills for Blair’s students and faculty at a special Tuesday-evening Skeptics exhibition. Adopting the format of an Intelligence Squared debate, two three-member teams debated the pros and cons of the October National Forensics League (NFL) topic: On balance, the benefits of genetically modified foods outweigh the harms.

Skeptics audience members had the opportunity to both observe and engage with debaters, and Karthik and Teddy were pleased with the school-wide exposure the event generated for the team. It also gave team members the opportunity to prepare for two important fall competitions, at which they were pitted against students with far more experience.

Competitive Accomplishments
At the start of Peddie Week 2014, Blair hosted the inaugural MAPL debate tournament, welcoming teams from Peddie...
School, The Hill School and The Lawrenceville School to campus. The subject of debate was the NFL's November topic, “On balance, public subsidies for professional athletic organizations in the United States benefit their local communities,” and 20 debaters squared off in teams of two throughout the afternoon. When the results were tallied, Blair was victorious, with all three of its teams ranked among the top five: Sanjay Paul ’16 and Ben Salander ’16 placed first; Karthik and Teddy placed third; and Alecia Mund ’17 and Emily Choi ’17 placed fourth.

For Ms. McMillan, the MAPL tournament was especially rewarding. “This was a wonderful opportunity for Blair to host MAPL schools in a healthy, non-athletic event,” she said. “I enjoyed interacting with faculty colleagues, and all of the competitors were committed, serious, polite, kind and professional throughout the day.”

Two weeks later, the Blair debaters traveled to Randolph, New Jersey, to participate in a New Jersey Forensics League tournament that attracted teams from across the state. The same tournament had been the team's first competitive outing in 2013, and they had achieved stellar results, placing fourth of 35 total teams. This year, team members placed in the top 10 in every event they entered, including at the novice freshman level.

“We are beating teams from schools that have well-established debate programs and where kids practice for two to three hours after school every day,” Karthik said. He attributes his team’s success to the way classes are conducted at Blair. “Every day, we have to speak eloquently in class and effectively argue our opinions. As debate competitors, we’ve built on those skills.”

Looking to the Future

One of Karthik and Teddy’s goals in establishing a debate team at Blair was to see that the activity thrived beyond their four years at the School. To that end, they have already passed the baton of leadership to juniors Sanjay and Ben, while sophomores Alecia and Emily are waiting in the wings for the following year.

Karthik looks forward to returning to Blair for his 10th or 15th reunion and seeing a debate program that’s become an integral part of School life. “It will feel good knowing that I helped to establish something that’s still here,” he said.

For Ms. McMillan, Teddy and Karthik’s accomplishments with the debate team represent the “very best kind of collegiality.” “We’ve all learned from each other,” she said. “Everyone on the team brought a skill set to the table that has made this activity incredibly enriching.” She has no doubt that debate is at Blair to stay.
In January, students and faculty embarked on the second semester of the Blair LEADS program, a signature initiative that has enhanced the School’s academic program by focusing on five critical leadership and communications competencies: Leadership communications, global Engagement, self-Awareness, ethical Decision-making and Service.

In 2014-2015, the cross-curricular, interdepartmental program was piloted at all grade levels. Under the direction of history department chair Jason Beck, who worked closely with a dedicated faculty team, including Blair’s scholar-in-residence, Harvard professor Timothy Patrick McCarthy, PhD, a course of study was designed specific to each class year to instill in students the communication skills they need to take on active leadership roles in the community, and beyond, by their senior year.

“The program first focuses on skills development for freshmen and sophomores and then becomes more open-ended for juniors and seniors as they begin to navigate meaningful leadership roles,” said Mr. Beck.

Values Exploration & the Art of Storytelling

Leadership-skills development begins with ninth-graders filming personal narratives for The Blair Leadership Stories Project, an experience that is repeated in Advanced Placement English during senior year so that students can see how much
they have progressed as public speakers and storytellers during their time at Blair (to view a number of compelling videos filmed this year, please visit www.blair.edu/leadership-stories).

This fall, the class of 2015 took on the challenge of creating a “virtual essay,” composing and sharing their stories in small groups, as well as in front of their entire classes, without ever writing them down—a process that helped them hone their ability to speak with poise and conviction. Having no written script of their narrative taught the students to control pace, inflection and the overall arc of their anecdotes, said veteran English teacher Carolyn Conforti-Browse ’79, and gave students the opportunity to tell “fresh and authentic” tales each go-round.

“The students enjoyed the in-class workshops and having the opportunity to work with their faculty coaches,” said Ms. Conforti-Browse, who oversees the curricular side of The Leadership Stories Project with English and economics teacher James Moore. “The real challenge for seniors was being filmed in a formal situation, a challenge they will likely face in the future as they navigate ways to authentically connect in this digital world.”

At the start of the spring semester in early January, Dr. McCarthy traveled from Boston to Blairstown to host several workshops with students, one of which kicked off The Blair Leadership Stories Project for the class of 2018. Dr. McCarthy encouraged ninth-graders to embrace the project as an opportunity to develop the essential communication and leadership skills they will need to be successful at Blair, in college and in their professional careers.

Throughout the spring semester, and under the guidance of Mr. Moore, who oversaw the freshman leg of the project, each student crafted and delivered a personal narrative on film. The program is a natural extension of Blair’s traditional public-speaking curriculum, Ms. Conforti-Browse explained, and in the project’s first two years, it has markedly intensified the School’s long-standing dedication to teaching its students the art of effective communication.

“The Blair Leadership Stories Project really does teach our students to talk about personal strengths in a compelling way,”
she said. “By giving them an avenue to articulate their beliefs and values to the community at large, the project has affirmed their sense of ‘their best self,’ which is what Blair is all about.”

**Relationship-Based Learning**

Beyond strengthening students’ core communications competencies, program coordinator Cassi Gerdsen said the project has also furthered the School’s commitment to knowing its students. Not only do faculty shepherd students through the process of refining their stories before they sit down in front of the camera, but Mrs. Gerdsen also coaches students one-on-one once they arrive in the “Leadership Stories” filming space on the second floor of Hardwick Hall.

“The coaching process has allowed me to connect with more students than ever before,” she said. “In my other role as Blair’s School photographer, I am often on the sidelines, viewing the athletes, artists and students through the lens of my camera. Throughout this project, I’ve found it so rewarding to get to know kids from a new perspective and see them as the well-rounded young adults they are.”

And with the addition of group filming this fall, during which three to four students spent a class block practicing, critiquing and recording their stories with Mrs. Gerdsen, the students have also gotten to know their peers on a deeper level. “A powerful part of this project is that it brings the community closer, all while teaching kids many of the communications skills they need to be successful throughout their lives,” she said.

**Building on Values Exploration With Leadership Study**

The freshman experience is followed by a stepped-up focus on leadership communications during sophomore year in an experimental and self-reflective seminar team-taught by 20 faculty members. Offered for the first time in 2014-2015, the hands-on seminar asks students to assess and convey their own opinions, values and passions, while also learning—in what Dr. McCarthy calls the “signature component” of the Blair LEADS program—how to voice their views eloquently and call others to action on the issues about which they are most passionate.

Through a combination of lectures, essay writing, oral narratives, class debate and small-group work, students are encouraged to tailor their definition of “leadership” as they envision the types of responsibilities they might take on in the community during the last half of their Blair careers.

To connect classroom study to real-world global issues, the seminars have focused on human rights this spring, with every student choosing a specific issue to explore in a TED talk-style presentation at the end of the year. Each seminar will choose the best speaker to present at a school-wide event in mid-May, and winners of that competition will receive sizeable financial stipends supporting global service projects or travel experiences.

The next step in the Blair LEADS curriculum remains open-ended, said Mr. Beck, as juniors take on more responsibilities within the community this spring and consider the leadership roles they might assume as seniors. Mr. Beck and Dr. McCarthy also expect juniors to engage in a series of extracurricular public-speaking engagements and real-world leadership opportunities as the Blair LEADS program is further developed next year.

**Hands-On Learning & Service**

As the program’s pilot year nears its end, students and faculty have launched a number of service projects, both domestically and abroad, that have taken their focus on leadership communications beyond the theoretical. This year, students and faculty are traveling to all corners of the globe to engage in service work made more
On Friday, May 15, Blair students, faculty and staff will volunteer at several Blairstown-area organizations on the School’s second-annual Day of Service. We invite alumni and parents to share in the spirit of the day by volunteering in their own communities!

**CALLING ALL ALUMNI!**

On Friday, May 15, Blair students, faculty and staff will volunteer at several Blairstown-area organizations on the School’s second-annual Day of Service. We invite alumni and parents to share in the spirit of the day by volunteering in their own communities!

Whether you participate in a special project on or around the 15th or you volunteer in an ongoing service project in your community, let us know so that we can acknowledge the service work of our extended Blair family.

Blair will post photos to the School’s Instagram account (@blair_academy) throughout the Day of Service. We encourage parent and alumni volunteers to share their images and video with us online using the hashtag #BlairDayofService.

[www.blair.edu/day-of-service](http://www.blair.edu/day-of-service)

“A pillar of Blair LEADS is global engagement, an essential component of 21st-century learning,” said Mr. Beck. “We live in an interconnected world, and our students need to appreciate and explore their own connection to others. These service trips give our kids a sense that their actions matter and that they can truly effect change by serving others.”

**A ‘Work in Progress’**

Students and faculty have built a solid foundation for Blair LEADS thus far, yet the program is still very much a “work in progress,” Mr. Beck noted. Despite its “evolutionary nature,” the curriculum’s structure and content has already strengthened the way Blair students communicate their values and beliefs, and the way they perceive what it means to be a leader.

“We’re still discerning how to best integrate this program into the life of the School,” Mr. Beck said. “It’s a living and growing project—we’re always thinking about what we can do differently and how we can make this curriculum even better. Over time, there may be changes in the shape and scope of Blair LEADS, but the fundamentals, and our commitment as Blair faculty to superior academic preparation and public service, will always remain intact.”

meaningful by classroom preparation and reflection (for more on this year’s trips to destinations across the Americas, Europe and Africa, please visit [www.blair.edu/global-service-travel](http://www.blair.edu/global-service-travel)).
Scholar in Residence Discusses Human Rights & Leadership during January Visit

Harvard professor and Blair’s scholar in residence Timothy Patrick McCarthy, PhD (pictured above on right), returned to campus in January for two days of conversation, classes and workshops centered on human rights and leadership communications. Dr. McCarthy’s visit gave teachers and students fresh insight into two of the major topics they explored during spring semester Blair LEADS classes, part of the School’s global leadership, communication and service initiative.

“One of the reasons I love coming to campus on a regular basis is that it provides me with the opportunity to talk with students and faculty about the new curriculum,” Dr. McCarthy said. “These kinds of conversations, and constant feedback and reflection are essential as Blair LEADS becomes a central pedagogical commitment of Blair Academy.”

Dr. McCarthy’s packed schedule began with a presentation to freshmen about the relationship between strong communication and effective and inspiring leadership. “There are many different ways to be a leader,” Dr. McCarthy advised class members, who were beginning to formulate personal narratives for The Blair Leadership Stories Project. “However, one thing all leaders have in common is their ability to communicate well. Stories are one important way to do that—to express our values and motivations, and to connect meaningfully with others on a human level.”

Sophomores focused on human rights during leadership-communications seminars this spring, and in his hour-long meeting with the class, Dr. McCarthy, who serves as program director of Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, helped students define “human rights” and connect this definition to concrete issues and current events. He shared how the “messiness of the world” inspired him to activism around such issues as the AIDS epidemic and apartheid in South Africa as a high school and college student, and how his own human-rights work has evolved over time.

“This semester, you’ll figure out what fires you up,” Dr. McCarthy told sophomores, “and craft a speech that conveys your passion for the topic.” He noted that in his many years of working with students, he is continually inspired by young people who can speak eloquently on a compelling topic. Sophomores’ human-rights studies will culminate in a public-speaking competition on May 12, at which winners will be awarded sizeable financial stipends supporting global service projects or trips during their remaining time at Blair. Dr. McCarthy was hopeful that the semester’s activities would inspire in every sophomore a commitment to doing good in the world.

In the final event of the visit, Head of School Chris Fortunato hosted Dr. McCarthy, a dozen students, and several teachers and administrators at a lively and thoughtful Head of School Round Table discussion on race relations that covered everything from national protests to campus attitudes. “I am so heartened to see that Blair students, faculty and staff are interested in coming together to wrestle with race as we all work to build a
more beloved community across lines of difference—racial, political or otherwise,” Dr. McCarthy said, referring to what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described as a “beloved community,” where empathy, acceptance, love and justice are valued and practiced. “The conversations I had with students and faculty throughout my visit gave me hope that we’re willing to do the hard work we need to move us all forward.”

Having served as the School’s scholar in residence for nearly a year, Dr. McCarthy said that he has been “incredibly impressed” by the young people at Blair. “They are some of the most thoughtful, generous, respectful, brave, funny, smart, self-aware, interesting and optimistic kids I’ve ever met,” he remarked. “I always leave Blair more inspired than I was when I got here. I just hope I can reciprocate that energy and inspiration!”

Colleen Smarth has been appointed Blair’s new assistant director of annual giving. Mrs. Smarth is well known to the Blair community, having worked closely with parents and alumni since 2011 in her role as advancement associate. In her new position, she assists Director of Annual Giving Meg Marsh in Blair Fund outreach and fundraising, and helps foster a culture of giving among Blair’s young alumni and senior class.

“I am delighted to congratulate Colleen as she assumes her responsibilities as assistant director of annual giving,” said Blair’s Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall. “She is a highly valued member of the advancement team, and I’m sure the many parents and alumni with whom she has forged connections share my confidence that she will find great success in her new role.”

Class representatives who have come to know and enjoy working with Mrs. Smarth will appreciate the fact she remains Class Notes editor for the Blair Bulletin. Mrs. Smarth holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Radford University and a master’s degree in communication arts from William Paterson University. She and her husband, Tim, are the parents of two sons, Ronan ’18 and Aidan.

BLAIR ADMISSION VIDEO FEATURED ON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL MANAGEMENT SITE

Independent School Management, Inc. (ISM) featured Blair’s Life on the Hilltop video in its September 2014 admission e-newsletter. Chosen for its professional feel and production as well as its thematic tie-in to the School’s last viewbook, Life on the Hilltop was highlighted as an exemplary model of independent school admission material.

“This recognition is an honor for Blair’s communications and admission teams,” said Assistant Head of School for Enrollment and Communications Peter G. Curran. “Their work in this video captures the spirit of our School and learning community through student and faculty commentary and campus footage. Prospective students and families will gain an in-depth look at Blair students’ lives inside and outside the classroom when they view it.”

ISM is a comprehensive management-support firm for private-independent schools in the United States and abroad.
Around THE ARCH

BLAIR LABS: NEW AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITY ENGAGES STUDENT SCIENTISTS

Blair LABS (Learning About Being a Scientist) is the brainchild of science teacher Carl Christianson, PhD. A former research scientist and professor at Boston College with a doctorate in biochemistry, Dr. Christianson initiated the after-school activity in part to help students overcome the disconnect between learning science in the classroom and actually being a scientist. “In class, we perform experiments to demonstrate a known outcome,” he said. “In a lab, scientists ask open-ended questions and figure out how to find an answer. And, really, the first step in the process is determining what question to ask.”

That is where Dr. Christianson started last fall with 10 enthusiastic junior and senior Blair LABS participants. Some students already planned to pursue careers in science, and some were just curious about a particular scientific problem, but, according to Dr. Christianson, most of them came into the lab thinking they had to conduct a lengthy, original research project to produce a major scientific breakthrough. He convinced them otherwise.

“Ideas came and went at first, as students researched potential projects to cure cancer or solve the energy crisis,” Dr. Christianson said. Throughout the process, students had the autonomy to make their own decisions—and mistakes—and this led to a certain level of frustration. Eventually, however, Dr. Christianson guided participants to investigate work that had already been done in their area of interest, then build upon it by asking better, smaller questions. In this way, students have designed doable experiments and created a framework to achieve results.

Blair LABS research projects run the gamut of scientific fields of study. Students are working to synthesize and test the efficacy of a synthetic vaccine; build a remote-controlled drone with articulated wings; harness sound waves and convert them to electricity that can be stored in a battery; engineer a motor for a skateboard; and design a bioreactor that uses the notoriously prolific kudzu plant as its fuel source. As the experiments’ testing phase got under way in late January, Dr. Christianson anticipated moving the activity from his Bogle Hall classroom to the School’s new maker space in early spring. Located in the former maintenance building at the corner of Park Street and Main Street in Blairstown, the maker space will alleviate the necessity of students’ setting up and breaking down at every Blair LABS session.

Mingjia Yang ’15 and Michelle Wu ’15 (pictured above, left) are collaborating on the drone project, with Mingjia focused on the engineering and construction of the mechanical bird with flappable wings and Michelle focused on its remote-control robotics. The theory of flight has long fascinated Mingjia, and the pair is pursuing the project mainly for the experience—and the excitement—of creating this unique drone themselves. They began the testing phase by building a balsa-wood prototype and were considering carbon fiber and other

WINTER-SPRING 2015
materials to construct the final drone. According to Mingjia, it’s all part of the exploration and adventure of Blair LABS.

“In physics lab, you know the conclusion before you start, but in Blair LABS, you take it step by step, and you never know what’s next,” he said. “As we researched this project, I learned how to branch out in my use of Internet resources, and most importantly, not to give up but to keep on digging. Eventually, we know we will have something tangible, an aesthetically beautiful product of our own creation. That is great motivation.”

“Blair LABS is modeled after a college research group,” Dr. Christianson noted, “since that’s where these students will be next. They’ll be prepared to tackle open-ended questions and comfortable not knowing what the outcome of their research will be.” Teamwork and collaboration among Blair LABS students is an all-important aspect of the program. “Science now is all about teamwork, and it’s important to know how to collaborate academically. When people ask questions about one another’s research, that’s often where innovation happens.”

DEAN OF COLLEGE COUNSELING CO-AUTHORS GUIDE TO ATHLETIC RECRUITING

Blair’s veteran Dean of College Counseling Lew Stival once again teamed up with Jeffrey Durso-Finley, co-director of college counseling at The Lawrenceville School, to publish an updated volume of their book Understanding Athletic Recruiting: A Comprehensive Guide for the High School Student-Athlete. First published in 2008, the book serves as a resource for prospective college athletes, parents, high school coaches and guidance counselors to help students navigate the recruiting process.

“In interviewing people for this book, one thing quickly became clear: Kids who want to play at the college level have invested a huge amount of time and energy into their sport by the time they are seniors in high school,” said Mr. Stival, who joined Blair’s faculty in 1987 and has headed the college counseling office for more than 20 years. “At Blair, students are fortunate that coaches and the athletics office are incredibly supportive, but many athletes in the United States don’t have that level of support—frequently leading to miscommunication and frustration.”

The 150-page, full-color handbook covers all aspects of the college athletic recruiting process, including detailed descriptions and case studies of self-recruiting and timing. The publication also includes advice from a number of college coaches, including those currently leading teams at Harvard, Columbia, Wesleyan, Emory, Denver, Ohio Wesleyan, Franklin & Marshall, Temple, Princeton and Middlebury.

Among the advice Mr. Stival and Mr. Durso-Finley offer: Start the process by carefully defining your goals; understand there can be a difference between what coaches say and what families hear; the college coach’s opinion matters more than that of any former coaches or any statistics; and the more flexible athletes are, the more likely they are to find a good fit, athletically, academically and socially.

The book also takes into account the different audiences involved in the recruiting process, including student-athletes and parents. Noting that the book could not have been published without the support of a wide-ranging network of college counselors at peer schools, Mr. Stival calls such relationship-based collaboration “critically important” in his line of work.

In that same spirit, he hopes his peers—along with students, parents and coaches—will find Athletic Recruiting helpful in deconstructing a process that has a lot of gray areas. “We were careful to write the book so that it has something for everyone, from the scholarship-bound all-American to the athlete who simply wants playing time in college,” Mr. Stival said. “Given the feedback so far, I think we succeeded in appealing to many audiences.”

For information about ordering the book, email collegerecruitingresource@gmail.com.
American chef and gastronome James Beard famously remarked, “Food is our common ground, a universal experience,” and food certainly brought Blair’s multi-national community together during International Weekend. One of the highlights of the January 8-11 event was the global buffet at Saturday evening’s Street Fair held in the Romano Dining Hall. Teachers, students and parents, representing 19 nations and ethnicities, offered samples of delicious cuisine, most of which they had prepared themselves. The entire community enjoyed these tastes of home as they danced the night away to music from around the world.

“International Weekend creates a lot of excitement as students and adults express pride in their home country or heritage,” said French teacher Maria Bowditch, who has served as the event’s organizer since its 1995 inception. “Sharing special foods and activities makes kids miss their homes a little less and draws us all closer as a community.”

This year, International Weekend encompassed four days of School-wide activities, including a Chapel presentation by native-Nicaraguan Spanish teacher Pedro Hurtado Ortiz, visits to favorite ethnic restaurants and a Sunday evening Vespers service that celebrated global community, unity and peace. But the international cuisine shared on Saturday evening was a big part of the event’s recipe for success.

Student chefs served foods that represented several countries and ethnicities, including Vietnam (grilled pork with lemongrass prepared by Quoc Nguyen ‘15 and fellow Vietnamese students); the Dominican Republic (empanadas, fried plantains called tostones and flan prepared by Helen Mercedes ‘18); the African-American diaspora (fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and cornbread prepared by Salley Baxter ‘15 and Sade Johnson ‘17); Hong Kong (dumplings and pork buns prepared by Lauren Tung ‘17 and Luisa Lobo ‘15) and the Jewish heritage (latkes, hamantaschen cookies and a Yemenite Shabbot bread called jachnun prepared by Sydney Altman ‘16 and Brianna Annunziata ‘16).

Parents from the Blairstown area prepared and served some family favorite dishes, too, like Italian sausage and peppers made by John and Patricia Bottone, parents of Chris ‘16; “world-famous” Italian meatballs made by Grace Faust, mother of Jenna ‘16; Russian/eastern European beef brisket made from a generations-old recipe by Alex Holtzman, father of Matthew ‘16; Philippine pork barbecue and bihon (rice noodles with vegetables and chicken) made by Andy and Maria Bazsa, parents of Alexa ‘18; Turkish cookies, pastries and hummus made by Robin Cavusoglu, mother of Zeynep ‘18; and Egyptian koshary (black lentils and rice), red lentil soup and baklava made by Hisham and Nabila Sobhy, parents of Aya ‘17 and Adham ‘18.

Ilze Bars, mother of Aleks Sipols ‘17, was back at International Weekend for a second year, serving homemade Latvian specialties including piparkukas (gingerbread cookies), piragi (bacon buns) and buberts, a sweet cream-of-wheat custard known as Latvian manna. The happy—and well-fed—parents, students and teachers in attendance agreed that events like International Weekend bring the community together in a special way.
In this age of global connectedness, people often travel to the far corners of the world to serve and bring hope to those in need. Not so for Julius Coles ’07—in his case, service brings him home to East Harlem, New York.

A varsity basketball player for the Bucs and the Division I Canisius College Golden Griffins, Julius now plays professional basketball in the international Macedonian Superleague. From October to May, he travels throughout Europe and Africa, competing against some of the world’s top basketball talent in a tough intercontinental league. Julius played in championship games in his first two professional seasons (2012-2013 and 2013-2014), and his team came away with two silver medals—an exhilarating accomplishment that has him convinced that “a gold medal is coming somewhere in the near future.”

You might say Julius is living the dream. If he lost touch with his Harlem neighborhood in the excitement of this adventure, it would be perfectly understandable. But despite the whirlwind of international travel, and the on- and off-court demands of life in professional basketball, Julius has kept his sight set squarely on his community. In fact, at the age of 26, he has already taken on a leadership role in mentoring the next generation of East Harlem neighborhood kids.

Believe the Dream
Last summer, Julius organized a one-day basketball tournament for boys and girls ages 6 to 18 during East Harlem’s July 26 Community Day. He called it “Believe the Dream,” and his goal was to promote positivity for kids who are growing up in a pretty tough place.

“In recent years, East Harlem youth have embraced this culture of gangs and gun violence,” Julius said. “I believe it’s because a lot of them have lost hope for a better way.” Remembering the joy of playing with his teenage friends in the “Al Murf” basketball tournament, he wanted to recreate that feeling for today’s neighborhood youth. “For one day, I wanted to put
The tournament was a complete success. Event sponsor Stance Socks provided a free pair of socks to the 80 kids who participated, and Julius received nothing but positive feedback. During the fall and winter, he began organizing this summer’s second-annual Believe the Dream tournament while still overseas. “I know it’s going to be another great day!” he said, adding that he plans to eventually expand the tournament to be a weekend-long event.

Not Just for a Day
Julius’s service to the youth of his community doesn’t stop at Believe the Dream. Throughout the year, he serves as a mentor in the Boys’ Club of New York’s ISP (Independent School Placement) Prep program, counseling kids on transition to boarding school. Julius’s own path from public elementary school in East Harlem to junior high at The Fessenden School in Massachusetts to high school at Blair uniquely qualifies him for this volunteer role.

“My primary job is to answer any questions the kids may have about life at boarding school,” he noted. “I’m someone who has been through it. I can relate to the kids and understand their skepticism about moving away from home and going to an unknown place—especially since some of the kids have never been out of their own neighborhoods.”

The Boys’ Club Impact
Julius’s volunteer service with the Boys’ Club reflects his desire to give back to an organization that was pivotal in his own life.

His mom enrolled him in the Boys’ Club’s after-school program just before he turned six years old, and Julius had fun trying everything from ping pong to pottery. “I was literally all over the place—of course!” he reminisced. But his time at the Boy’s Club was more than just enjoyable—it was crucial preparation for life outside his New York City neighborhood.

“At first, just being in the Boy’s Club building, interacting with different kids, made me more sociable,” he said. “I learned how to step outside my comfort zone to try new things.” Later, Antonio Aponte, the Boys’ Club director of educational services, played a huge role in guiding Julius’s steps toward boarding school. “I always catch myself thinking about how different my life could have been if I had not attended the Boys’ Club. As extreme as this may sound, I could have very well been dead or in jail. Where I’m from, it’s a blessing to make it past 21.”

The Fresh Prince
Julius’s experience at The Fessenden School, where he attended seventh through ninth grade, sometimes felt like “a tale of two worlds.” “I was like the Fresh Prince of Bel Air,” he laughed, “a kid from a housing project in East Harlem pulling up to this Hogwarts-like school where other kids were arriving in fancy cars. I spoke and dressed differently from anyone else—even my right and wrong were different. But,” he continued, “I loved every second of being away from home and having that independence.”

The academic challenge, not to mention the “amazing” basketball experience at Fessenden, prepared Julius well for high school. “Thanks to Fessenden and teachers like my sixth-grade teacher, Ron Clark, I knew what to expect academically, how to maneuver on campus, and most importantly, how to interact and be comfortable with people from all different races and walks of life,” he said.
Blair & Beyond

“Blair is where I learned to accept who I was,” Julius remarked introspectively. “For a long time, I was too preppy for ‘the hood’ and too ‘hood’ for the preps. At Blair, I learned I was a unique mix of both, and that all I’d experienced from both vantage points affected the way I perceived things in life.”

Several Blair faculty members especially impacted Julius’s years at the School. Math teacher and assistant basketball coach Terrell Ivory was like a big brother. “If I ever needed anything, I knew I could call him,” Julius said. “Mr. Kampmann is the reason I received good grades on the hundreds of papers I wrote in college. And I owe extraordinary thanks to my Spanish teachers, Mrs. Wenner and Mrs. Kaufman. My Spanish has been an unbelievable blessing, often helping me break through language barriers that have come up during international work and travel.”

And then there was basketball—an experience that, to Julius, was all about perseverance and determination. “Coach Mantegna is the best coach I’ve had thus far in my basketball career,” he said. “He actually kicked me off the team my sophomore year. I was very immature at that point—it was exactly what I needed. I can say that now that I’m older!” he laughed. “Seriously, though, at Blair, I was never the best player on the team, but I was so competitive all I did was work. Being on Coach Mantegna’s team, you have to have pretty thick skin. I don’t know if I’ve been yelled at more by any other coach, but I learned everything playing for him.”

From Blair, Julius matriculated at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, where, as the first person in his family to attend college, he earned an undergraduate degree in communications and a master’s degree in sports administration in just four years. His plans for the foreseeable future include traveling and playing basketball for as long as he can and continuing to be a positive influence in his community.

Providing Hope

In Julius’s opinion, Blair’s strengthened commitment to service is “a beautiful thing.” If at all possible, he will participate in the School’s second-annual Day of Service on May 15 from wherever he is in the world. Eventually, he would like to incorporate his multicultural experiences and the many life lessons he’s learned into “something special” for youth.

“The greatest thing any one of us can do is to provide hope for someone who has lost it,” Julius said. Inspiring words, yes, but his actions speak even louder.
It takes a bit of creative genius to pursue a career in the arts. It also takes perseverance, hard work and a whole lot of drive to follow your heart down an often zig-zaggy path to success. Dick Boak ’68 and Tim Fite ’95 are artistic trailblazers, pursuing their craft on roads less taken. Although they graduated from Blair in different eras, and their journeys to artistic fulfillment have been as unique as the works they’ve created, both produced milestone projects last year that garnered significant recognition. And both credit a Blair teacher or two with helping them start out on the right foot.
The bright, fuzzy line between geek and cool contains an infinite number of points, one of which is this: Dick Boak in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium of Manhattan’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, strumming his Martin acoustic guitar while Steve Miller lobbs out a bluegrass version of The Joker.

The rest of us don’t get to do these things, but such is Dick’s evolved and collaborative life with famous guitar players. He is likely the only non-professional musician in the world to find his way onto the stage with such celebrities as his friend Steve, who, after 40 years, still speaks of the “pompitous” of love.

Poet & Draftsman

Like so many who ultimately find themselves in interesting places, Dick began his journey trying to evade something he didn’t want to do—in his case, play a sport during his junior year at Blair. The faculty committee was impressed by his petition to spend the winter season pursuing a writing project and allowed him to, as he described it, “churn out daily mini-tragedies, often accompanied by ironic illustrations.”

This endeavor, combined with exposure to the beat poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti in English teacher Tony Cassen’s creative-writing class, helped him realize that his talents and interests would not lead down the path to law school or a corner office. At the same time, however, Dick was enrolled in fine arts teacher Robert Atkinson’s drafting class, which impressed upon him the importance of discipline. “Atkinson recognized my talent for drafting,” Dick said, “tormenting me toward the compulsive perfection of drafting detail in India ink.”

A Meandering Path to C.F. Martin & Co.

Thus, the stage was set for an artistically creative career. Not surprisingly, then, as a student at Gettysburg College, Dick built a circus cage, installed it on the lawn in front of the dining hall the night before Parents’ Weekend, and occupied it for three days as both a tribute to Franz Kafka and a protest of sorts. After college, he moved to Vermont, where he “worked a series of disastrous jobs.” At one point, he hand-built geodesic domes and other dwellings at California’s legendary Morningstar Ranch commune; later, he honed his drafting skills on extensive pointillist illustration.

Eventually, Dick returned to the East Coast, and Mr. Atkinson arranged for him to teach art and woodworking at Blair from 1973 to 1974. This was followed by a two-year teaching stint in Stowe, Vermont, after which he found himself back in his hometown of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, where once again he tapped the skills and discipline he learned in Mr. Atkinson’s class: Dick was hired as a design draftsman for C.F. Martin & Co.
Acoustic Guitars, Artist Relations & Archives
Dick has been at Martin for nearly four decades now, acquiring the better trappings of conventionality over the years, including a wife and family, and a salary that allowed him to buy a house and send his daughter, Emily ’13, to Blair. Along the way, he has designed and built nearly a hundred custom guitars; pursued his passions for writing, illustration and music; and more or less invented everything that fills his day.

Dick initiated C.F. Martin’s Artist Relations program in 1995, and when Eric Clapton and John Mayer and, yes, Steve Miller, want new acoustic guitars, they call Dick. He now holds the title of Director, Museum, Archives and Special Projects and has created a surprisingly compelling museum at the Martin factory. Before Dick got hold of it, the Martin archives were just several dozen boxes of old documents and photographs covered in rosewood sawdust. Now, back among the company’s corporate offices, there’s a state-of-the-art facility for storing invaluable artifacts, including letters from Gene Autry, Mae Belle Carter, Johnny Cash and Joan Baez, and a daguerreotype of Madame DeGoni, a mid-19th-century Spanish guitar virtuoso for whom founder Christian Martin Sr. designed and made the first “X-braced” guitar. Dick has written three definitive books about Martin guitars and their place in musical-instrument history and, most recently, he compiled a pictorial history entitled simply C.F. Martin & Co. for Arcadia Publishing’s “Images of America” series.

Tapped by the Met
It is rare to suggest that anyone we know is among the most knowledgeable in the world in his or her discipline. But it’s no stretch to imagine that Dick Boak knows more about acoustic guitars than all but a few of the seven billion people on the planet. After all, two years ago, the staff at Manhattan’s Metropolitan Museum of Art engaged Dick and a group of Martin experts in planning their 2014 exhibition, “Early American Guitars: The Instruments of C. F. Martin.”

As one of the exhibit’s organizers, Dick worked with the curator of the Met’s musical-instrument collection to create the most comprehensive collection of historical guitars by Christian Frederick Martin and his contemporaries ever assembled. The exhibit featured 35 instruments from private owners and C. F. Martin’s museum. Dick also coordinated the exhibition’s program of events, giving one lecture and performance and recruiting a range of historians and performers to educate and entertain during the exhibit’s 11-month run.

From Blair to the Stage With Steve Miller
Which brings us back to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At center stage stands Steve Miller—the Gangster of Love, the Space Cowboy, Maurice—maybe a little grayer than we remember, but still rhapsodizing about loving peaches and shaking trees. Country music legend Marty Stuart stands to his right and next to him, Dick Boak strums along with a red Martin guitar, harmonizing with Steve’s assurance that he “sure don’t want to hurt no one.”

Dick, because he knows so much and knows so many and, most of all, knows how to follow both his heart and his head, began with a book of edgy poems and drafts at Blair Academy and eventually brought all of this here—here to the Met!—and made it happen. ☐
As an artist, Tim (Sullivan) Fite defies categorization. He’s a musician with nearly a dozen twang-pop to avant hip-hop records to his credit. He’s a visual artist whose mediums include paint, letterpress printing, fused glass and video. He’s a writer who skews modern consumerist culture with satirical lyrics. He’s a collaborator and soloist, at times a student and teacher. “I do whatever I want,” Tim said, “whatever strikes me at the time. It may not be good for business, but it keeps my heart happy.”

As it turns out, though, in keeping his heart happy, he has created a business—the business of making art. It’s both his livelihood and his means of exploring the world and engaging with people. His latest project—iBeenHACKED—marks the first time Tim has incorporated every one of his practices into one cohesive body. And even though he considers any project that “goes beyond the confines of [his] mind” a success, this one attracted the attention of The New Yorker and the Wall Street Journal, was fully funded by Tim Fite ’95.
supporters through an online Kickstarter project, and gave him the means to directly engage his audience with his art. In other words, it was successful on every level.

iBeenHACKED

iBeenHACKED is a multimedia, multilayered, multisensory exploration of our relationship with digital culture that grew out of Tim’s love-hate relationship with technology. He had resisted getting a cell phone for years, valuing his alone time and eschewing the need for constant connectedness. Finally, in 2006, a friend convinced him to buy one. A couple of years later, he traded up to an iPhone—and found he was powerless in the face of its addictive charms.

“I was like everyone else,” he told reporter Ben Greenman of The New Yorker. “I texted. I checked my mail. I played Angry Birds.” But it got even worse. “I started getting a phantom buzzing in my leg. It was like the feeling of a call coming in, but my phone wasn’t even in my pocket. For me, that was extremely profound. Technology wasn’t just messing with my time or my productivity. It was messing with my body.”

Tim decided to try to make sense of technology and the effect it was having on his life—and all our lives—in the way that made the most sense to him: through his art. In the first part of iBeenHACKED, he wrote and recorded an album, taking on selfies, emoticons and other annoying manifestations of digital culture in hip-hop tracks that “walk that jagged line between humor and gravitas.” In the second part of the project, Tim created visual art to accompany and augment the album, including fused-glass fake iPhones (dubbed Phoneys), tweet-drawings, and a giant, interactive, storefront-window cell phone.

The Big Ideas

“Each part of iBeenHACKED informs the other parts, and folks are paying attention because it’s not just a record or just an art project,” Tim said. “Configuring the project this way allows others to see it and helps me understand it. Plus, the theme is the Internet, which is timely and relevant. It’s an umbrella under which we all live, and it’s the umbrella that covers this whole project.”

And, while iBeenHACKED may not actually resolve any technological conundrums, Tim feels that the success of the project is in the telling: He was able to use creative expression to deal with something that’s really hard to explain and fuse many moving parts into a single work. “It was exciting to work on—like doing full-on origami!” he said.

‘Thumbs up’ to Beam Center

Tim completed the visual art component of iBeenHACKED in April 2014 at Beam Center in Brooklyn, New York, a nonprofit, youth-focused arts center. His month-long residency was especially meaningful, since working in the studio and talking with students helped him transform his ideas into real, physical objects.

“Basically, I was able to take the wild ping pong party in my head and put it in a room, creating walls around something that was totally limitless,” Tim said. “The kids would come into the studio, ask questions, ask if they could help. There was so much interaction, and it was especially relevant to the project because these kids are the future of the Internet. They don’t find it scary, and that helped calm some of my own fears.”
Art & Kids
If anyone knows how important the creation of art can be to kids, it’s Tim. His parents, former Blair fine arts teacher Rita Baragona and St. Clair Sullivan, are both accomplished artists who encouraged Tim and his brother, Greg Sullivan ’92, to express themselves through art. “Drawing was the default activity when we were little,” Tim laughed. “I have sketchbooks full of crazy characters from stories my dad would read to us.”

During his four years at Blair, Tim found an outlet for teenage angst in art and music. “Like all teens, I was cranky, full of piss and vinegar,” he said. “When I was feeling social or academic pressure, or feeling overwhelmed by Blair and everything I had to do, I could put every bit of that energy into something productive in the art room. Teachers like my mom and others were very open to that and supported my work. It was really, really wonderful.”

Tim also played in a few bands, acted with the Blair Academy Players and took his first guitar lessons with Mr. Pensak at Blair. “Mr. Pensak had the same pedagogical approach as my mom,” Tim recalled. “Neither felt a lesson had to be rigidly structured. Basically, it was, ‘Here’s someone who has the energy, I’ll give him the tools.’”

Becoming an Artist
Following his Blair graduation, Tim went from art student to art teacher when he volunteered for City Year, the non-profit that would become AmeriCorp. He spent a year in Boston, working with domestic-violence victims and giving after-school art lessons at the Dorchester Boys and Girls Club. “It was one of the best experiences of my life,” he said. “Service is a very powerful way to understand how to be an adult.”

After City Year, Tim headed off to Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, determined to become a teacher. “I wanted to get the most bang for my buck from my education, so I resisted studying art at first. But I soon realized that I couldn’t handle academic life without the creative life,” he said. So, he compromised with a double major in printmaking (a discipline he described as one “you can’t teach yourself in your basement”) and Black Studies. He graduated in 2000, was offered a record contract shortly thereafter, and the deal was sealed: Tim went all in for art.

“The life I’ve chosen is definitely not a straightforward one,” Tim remarked. “Sometimes, it can be disheartening, and I’m not always sure I can pay the bills. But the rewards of creative stimulation far outweigh monetary success.”

Follow the Money
When it came to raising the money to produce iBeenHACKED, Tim warily decided to give Kickstarter.com a try. Ironically, the online crowdfunding platform provided a perfect vehicle for meaningful audience engagement and direct distribution of Tim’s work. He raised $3,050 more than his $15,000 goal and created donor “rewards” that were artistic elements of iBeenHACKED. These included collectible, hand-signed letterpress prints and fused-glass Phoney, billed as “the world’s leading smartphone surrogate—an ‘artful’ way to soothe the symptoms of digital withdrawal.”

“Conceptually, Kickstarter fit like a glove because it lives, on the Internet,” Tim noted. “But, beyond that, it was so gratifying to engage directly with people who care and create art for them that was integral to the project.”

Word to the Wise
As someone who is making a name for himself as a musician and artist, Tim had a few words of advice for young people considering a career in the arts: Don’t do it. “The pessimist in me says, ‘Get a job!’” he laughed. But after a beat, he reconsidered. “The optimist in me says if there’s no other way, if it’s truly all you can do, if it’s the fabric with which your soul is bound, then go get it with everything you’ve got. And don’t let anyone tell you what to do—not even me. Not even me.”

Get the Latest
Dick Boak released his first professional CD, Beside You, earlier this year. Preview this work at www.dickboak.com or purchase it on iTunes or CD Baby.

To view Tim Fite’s work and touring schedule, visit his website at www.timfite.com.
The Blair Academy Players set the stage for another year of successful productions with fall and winter plays that showcased the many talents of the School’s young performing artists.

The curtain rose on the Players’ 2014-2015 season with October’s production of *A Flea in Her Ear*, a classic French farce of marital mayhem written by David Ives. Director Craig Evans, a veteran theatre and English teacher at Blair, said the actors reveled in the humor of the 100-year-old script and were pleasantly surprised by how much they enjoyed putting on the show.

“The plot line resonated with the actors more than they thought it would, and being that it was an ensemble play, every student embraced his or her role and had a chance to shine,” Mr. Evans said.

In January, the Players returned to the stage for a night of one-act “plays about plays.” Throughout the evening’s two shows, theatre-focused humor was at the forefront of the plot lines, noted director Micki Kaplan McMillan, who has taught theatre and English at Blair since 2006.

Ms. McMillan said she was most impressed by the work students did outside rehearsal, researching the historical context of each show, as well as the physical, mental and emotional traits of their characters.

“Our students are so willing to put in the work to make the show authentic and successful,” she said. “The material we choose to perform in Blair’s performing arts program is sophisticated and advanced; our Players could go up against some college and professional theatres and stand out because they believe so deeply in what they are doing.”

In mid-February, the community enjoyed the Players’ rendition of Rupert Holmes’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in the annual winter musical. A play based on an unfinished Charles Dickens novel, the production was unconventionally interactive: Throughout each of the Players’ three performances, the actors broke down the “fourth wall” of the stage to ask the audience to decide the characters’ fates and, ultimately, how the play would end. Once the audience voted, the cast quickly recalled the lines for that particular scene and the resulting chain of events.

“We had so many strong actors deep into the cast—it’s been a really talent-rich year,” Mr. Evans said, commending the Players’ dedication to the show. “The students were excited to take on the task of learning the different lines for each possible outcome, and they enjoyed putting on a different variation of the show each night.”

The Players will take their final bows of the season at two plays in May: *Picnic*, by William Inge (May 7-9), and *Almost, Maine*, by John Cariani (May 14-16). Pulitzer Prize–winning *Picnic* follows two widowed neighbors whose calm Midwestern lives are suddenly shaken up when a young man rolls into town. In *Almost, Maine*, the Players take to the Robert J. Evans Open Air Theatre to portray characters falling in and out of love in a remote, almost-unheard-of town on the outskirts of the state border.
Players Restage Production for First Time in Evans’ History

This winter, veteran faculty member Craig Evans challenged a talented group of Players with The Mystery of Edwin Drood, the only show he has ever reprised in his 20-year career at Blair. The 1997 production of Drood was the final musical to grace the stage of Memorial Hall (now Timken Library), and Mr. Evans noted it was one of his all-time favorite Blair productions. He decided to bring the musical back to Blair’s stage after attending a spring 2014 production of Drood directed by Adam Sampieri ’99, drama department chair at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics.

A member of the original Drood cast in 1997, Mr. Sampieri was an experienced actor before he came to Blair, but he had no intention of participating in theatre at the School. A friend serendipitously pushed him to audition for a role in the musical, and Mr. Sampieri credits Mr. Evans with teaching him about the “magic of theatre” that winter, something he says has helped shape every step of his career in the industry.

“I’ve never had more fun doing a show at Blair than I did with Drood, and it was probably the smallest role I ever had,” said Mr. Sampieri, who played Deputy. “Performing the show last year with my own students was amazing—I had come full circle in my theatre career, and I know I never would have gotten there without Craig.”

Though he was unable to return to campus for the February 2015 performances in Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts, Mr. Sampieri said he was there in spirit: “All these years later, I am still proud to count myself among the Blair Academy Players.”

Photos from Blair’s 1997 production of The Mystery of Edwin Drood.
Visiting Artists Exhibit Range of Media in Blair’s Romano Gallery

The Blair community enjoyed an impressive array of artwork during the 2014-2015 school year, as The Romano Gallery hosted fine artists of varying mediums. The final show of the year—the Annual Student Art Exhibition—is now on display through May 19 and features the sculptures, drawings, paintings, photographs, videos and graphic arts of Blair’s talented young artists.

Alumnus Hugh Walton ’91 opened the gallery season in September 2014 with a show of videos and ink-jet prints. In the exhibit, the artist explored his personal difficulty with reading as a young student and challenged viewers to understand the verbal meaning of letters by arranging them in rapid, hard-to-read sequences.

“Hugh holds a special place in my heart because he was my first Blair student to train at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD),” said Rita Baragona, co-director of the gallery. “The opening of his exhibit at Blair was truly a symbol of his art career coming full circle.”

Painter and printmaker Ahni Kruger’s work, inspired by extrapolations from ideas of entropy, was shown on campus the following month. Through her art, Ms. Kruger explores notions of order and chaos and reflects her concerns about global politics and environmental sustainability. Each work on display included a delicately complex structure or pattern that was disrupted to “evoke a sense of uncertainty, brokenness and fragmentation,” Ms. Kruger explained.

In November, The Romano Gallery featured the work of three local artists and longtime friends—Harry I. Naar, Mel Leipzig and Judith K. Brodsky—who exhibited a varied show of paintings and drawings.

“With a background in 20th-century modernism, the artists’ work also included representational and figurative elements of a 21st-century perspective,” said Ms. Baragona. “Though their work often reflects similar origins and motifs, Mr. Naar, Mr. Leipzig and Ms. Brodsky create very individual artworks that often explore intellectual, political and social issues of our time.”

In addition to cultivating their own artistic visions and careers, the three have played important roles in teaching and furthering the careers of young artists in New Jersey over the years, which was evidenced by their work with Blair’s students. In early November, Mr. Leipzig and Mr. Naar attended select...
fine arts classes and worked one-on-one with student artists, offering advice and wisdom about pursuing an artistic career.

Fine arts teacher Zoë Blatt exhibited oil paintings and a three-dimensional installation in The Romano Gallery’s first exhibition of 2015. The pieces featured in the collection were derived from work Ms. Blatt completed during summer 2014 as an artist-in-residence at the Skopelos Foundation for the Arts in Greece.

“In the exhibition, I tried to portray the visual experience of my daily life on the island, capturing the relationship between the natural landscape and the old architecture,” she said. “It was a joy to see the gallery transmit the feeling of Skopelos and the beauty that exists at each turn of the old village.”

Nature was a nexus of inspiration for February’s exhibit, which showcased the artwork of two visiting artists: Elizabeth Bisbing, who presented painted paper collages of wildflowers and two animations, and Mary Shuster, who designed jewelry inspired by her fascination with seed vessels, the cases that contain a plant’s seeds.

“Through different mediums, each artist expressed her sensibility as it relates to nature,” said Ms. Baragona. “The show epitomized the words of Ms. Shuster’s personal statement: ‘There is a delight and wonder found in the details and complexities of nature.’”

In another dual exhibition, Patricia Dahlman and Michael Dal Cerro displayed their two- and three-dimensional artwork in March. Ms. Dahlman, who draws inspiration from personal thoughts, life experiences and reactions to political events around the world, showed sculptures and other works combining several materials, including canvas, fabrics, thread and wire. The collaboration also included Mr. Dal Cerro’s woodcut prints, which incorporated images of elaborately colored architectural structures in densely layered spaces.

The Annual Student Art Exhibition, which opened on April 30 with a reception to celebrate the artwork of Blair’s fine artists, wraps up the 2014-2015 season. As always, the show highlights the hard work and talent of Blair’s art students at all levels of experience: Some students have taken art classes at Blair for only a short time, while seniors in the School’s advanced-level courses are exhibiting their work for the last time before graduation.

The Romano Gallery will post next year’s schedule of exhibits on Blair’s website in late July.
Blair’s vocal and instrumental musicians developed an outstanding repertoire for their spring-break European concert tour, and the School community had the opportunity to enjoy a preview of some of those works—and much more—at autumn and winter events in and around Blairstown.

The November 20 Fall Concert, held in Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts’ DuBois Theatre, featured the School’s Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, Chamber Choir and Singers—nearly 100 students in total. Instrumental highlights included Jazz Ensemble renditions of works by John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins with solos by Sanjay Paul ’16, David Hidalgo-Gato ’17, Robert Clayton ’16, Allan Wu ’15, Matt Kolodzik ’15 and others; and Orchestra performances of Dvorak’s Slavonic Dance No. 8, Bach’s Sheep May Safely Graze from Cantata 208 and Mozart’s Overture from The Marriage of Figaro. The Singers and Chamber Choir presented music spanning five centuries, including beautiful, lyrical pieces by Mendelssohn, Biebl and Vaughn Williams.

Throughout the fall, both Performing Arts Department Chair Jennifer Pagotto and Director of Vocal Music Nate Widelitz worked with students to develop a sense of unity in their musicianship. “Instrumentalists polished foundational elements of tone and technique while mastering some challenging pieces,” Mrs. Pagotto noted, while Mr. Widelitz brought vocalists’ focus to music-reading skills and the production of blended, balanced tone.

In December, the Orchestra, Singers and student-run A Cappella group took the show on the road to the Musikfest Café at ArtsQuest’s SteelStacks...
Entertainment Center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. An audience of more than 200 alumni, parents and prospective families enjoyed an afternoon of classical and holiday music at the concert that was jointly sponsored by Blair’s advancement and admission offices.

“I was especially proud of our musicians’ performance at SteelStacks,” Mrs. Pagotto said. “We gathered many hours prior to the concert to travel to Bethlehem, set the stage and rehearse in a new space. And after that long day—at a time in the semester when mustering your energy is particularly challenging—the students gave one of their best performances on each and every piece.”

Just before students traveled home for the holidays, the Singers and String Orchestra gave two final performances at the candlelit Christmas Vespers services, held at Blairstown’s First Presbyterian Church. Accompanied by organist Mr. Alphons Gunther, the musicians performed traditional carols that reflected the joy and wonder of Christmas.

Many Singers and instrumentalists performed in the cast and Pit Orchestra of The Mystery of Edwin Drood, the School’s

winter musical, and, in the weeks leading up to spring break, the musical ensembles put the finishing touches on their European-concert repertoire.

Mr. Widelitz has been impressed with the energy Blair students have brought to their work in the performing arts throughout the year. “The kids are excited about and dedicated to their musical pursuits,” he said, and this, combined with the performing arts faculty’s commitment to excellence—and to their students—has made it a musical year to remember at Blair.

From the Archives

The Blair LEADS leadership-communications initiative has antecedents in Blair’s history dating back to the late-19th and early-20th centuries. From the late 1880s to the early 1930s, Blair students considered persuasive writing and public speaking so important that they formed Greek-lettered literary societies to encourage one another to further develop these skills.

The societies engaged in “The Annual Contest” each February to showcase their skills in debate, declamation, oratory and the presentation of student-written essays. Students across campus celebrated the literary rivalry by hosting dances and social events. Kean University donated more than 20 items to Blair’s archives (including these Annual Contest and society meeting programs from 1903, 1905, 1906, 1914 and 1930), giving today’s students and faculty further insight into the competencies Blair literary societies practiced and promoted.
Anthony D’Amato ’06’s Album Release Noted in The Wall Street Journal

The Shipwreck from the Shore, Anthony D’Amato ’06’s third album, was released in September 2014, and Sophia Hollander’s August 29 article in The Wall Street Journal profiled the 26-year-old musician and described the record’s genesis.

According to the article, Mr. D’Amato became serious about guitar during his years at Blair and “approached his music with a scholarly diligence,” becoming a music journalist at 16. He matriculated at Princeton University, where he “grappled with the distinct writing challenge of penning songs” while studying songwriting with Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Paul Muldoon. Mr. Muldoon encouraged Mr. D’Amato to write the words before exploring music, and through the “invaluable experience” of studying with Mr. Muldoon, Mr. D’Amato “learned to ‘really focus on why every word is there,’ rather than being content with a clever rhyme.”

Although The Shipwreck from the Shore is Mr. D’Amato’s third album, it marks two firsts in his music career: It is his first album to be released under a record label (New West Records) and his first album for which he hired an outside producer. Sam Kassirer “expanded Mr. D’Amato’s folk-centric sound, steering the record away from strict acoustic guitar by adding trumpet, organs and a vibraphone, a kind of electric xylophone.”

The album, which has also received praise from National Public Radio, The New York Times, USA Today, the BBC and more, looks for resilience and strength in the face of doubt and loss. Mr. D’Amato noted that “the songs don’t dwell on the negative. They’re really more focused on coming out the other side.”

(full article) [http://goo.gl/aP1ap7](http://goo.gl/aP1ap7)
(Mr. D’Amato’s website) [www.anthonydamatomusic.com](http://www.anthonydamatomusic.com)

Senior Stocked Food Pantries With Fresh, Local Produce

Maiya Gibbs ’15 is passionate about finding a solution for world hunger. She plans to major in agriculture when she goes to college next fall and focus on sustainable farming and optimizing farmland use in countries worldwide. During summer 2014, however, the service-minded senior scaled her passion to the local level as she grew, harvested and delivered trunk loads of garden-fresh produce to five Blairstown-area food pantries.

“I grew up on a farm and never worried where my next meal was coming from,” Maiya said, “but when I participated in Blair service trips to Kenya and even to Wilmington, Delaware, I met families who had nowhere near that level of food security.” The experience was “eye opening,” and she decided to address the problem of hunger through her Girl Scout Gold Award project, “Grow to Give.”

Maiya Gibbs ’15 (center) and friends Bryan Uzbay ’15 and Jessica Lowndes ’15 encouraged Blairstown farmer’s market shoppers to donate to the G.I.F.T. program.
Maiya’s goal was to make healthy, local produce available to low-income families in Warren and Sussex counties. She accomplished this in two ways: First, she worked three gardens throughout the summer—one at her home, one at her uncle’s home and one in a community garden plot—and brought the weekly harvest of peppers, zucchini, cauliflower and other vegetables directly to local food pantries. Second, she became a volunteer advocate for G.I.F.T. (Give It Fresh Today) at Blairstown’s weekend farmer’s market. G.I.F.T. is an initiative of the Foodshed Alliance, a northwestern New Jersey non-profit devoted to promoting farming and locally grown food.

“Every Saturday, after dropping off produce at a food pantry, I’d head for the farmer’s market and become the Foodshed Alliance cheerleader,” Maiya said. “I’d talk to everyone I could about the G.I.F.T. program and let them know how they could help.” She encouraged farmer’s market patrons to buy some extra produce and donate it on the spot, donate vegetables from their own gardens or simply make a monetary contribution.

Maiya’s volunteer efforts were featured in the Foodshed Alliance’s September 2014 LocalShare newsletter, where she was lauded as one of the organization’s most dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. In the article, Maiya noted that she gained a better understanding of the need for fresh, local produce in food pantries through her work with LocalShare and the Foodshed Alliance. “I want to make sure everyone in our community knows where their next meal is coming from and help ensure there is a healthy option,” she said.

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**Can you identify the students in this picture from 1973?**

Email your answers to Suzy Logan at logans@blair.edu. The first three people to correctly identify the students pictured will win prizes from the Blair School Store.
One of the School’s most treasured and highly anticipated traditions, the Headmasters’ Societies Games (HMS), returned in 2015 with a few new twists. For five days in mid-February, students and faculty divided into four teams named for former Headmasters (Breed, Howard, Kelley and Sharpe) and went head-to-head in a number of events.

Of course, classic favorite contests, ranging from bake-offs and trivia matches to water-polo games and tug-of-war competitions, were all part of the week. However, the HMS co-commissioners, math teacher Nate Molteni and Director of Timken Library Ann Williams, were especially excited to unveil a new activity this year: the Blair Feud.

“Since Friday night’s talent show draws such a large audience and so much participation, we wanted to devise another fun, all-School event,” Mrs. Williams said, noting that this well-attended contest was created in response to suggestions from students and turned out to be one of the best additions to the Games yet.

At the conclusion of one of the closest HMS competitions to date, Team Sharpe had jumped ahead in total points, winning the 2015 Games, while Howard took second, Breed placed third and Kelley finished in fourth.

Teamwork, student leadership and community spirit were the highlights of the week-long competition, Mr. Molteni said. “HMS is so uniquely Blair. At the end of the day, its success is determined not only by every individual who participates, but also by the community coming together as a whole and embracing this great tradition. Something we do well each year is balance the spirit of competition with the spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie, which are all essential to a truly successful and fun week.”
Beyond the Buildings

Blair students of every era have benefited deeply from the School’s rich educational tradition and long-held commitment to relationship-based learning, but today’s students enjoy a Blair experience of exceptional depth and breadth. What has made the difference? The buildings constructed on Blair’s campus since the late 1980s have given academics, athletics, the arts and residential life the capacity to flourish.

Undoubtedly, the importance of Bogle Hall (1989), Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts (1997), Timken Library (1998), Annie Hall (1999), Blair Commons (2008) and Hardwick Hall (2008) extends far beyond the grace and beauty of the structures themselves. The buildings’ true impact has been the creation of spaces where faculty members have developed and implemented exciting programs that allow them to know and support students across all contexts: as scholars, artists, athletes, friends and leaders.

“As a result of Blair’s growing reputation as a dynamic, community-focused boarding school, we have experienced steady growth in applications, and admission has become increasingly more selective,” said Craig Hall, the School’s chief advancement officer. “At the same time, Blair has experienced greater philanthropic support from alumni, parents and friends.

Donors at every level have recognized the importance of giving back to the School that impacted their lives, strengthening it for future generations.”

A healthy cross-section of Trustees, administrators, faculty members and alumni played a role in envisioning and implementing the strategic growth that has taken place at Blair over the past quarter century. John C. Bogle ’47 and William R. Timken ’53 both served as Board Chair during this pivotal time in the School’s history and are major benefactors of the School. In this Bulletin feature, the two men reflect on the ways their alma mater has been strengthened over the years and their hopes for its future.
Q. What was the most important milestone, philanthropic or otherwise, achieved by the School during your Chairmanship (1986-2001)?

A. I do not have the temerity to name a single milestone that marked my long tenure as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Blair Academy. But if I were to do so, it took place during my second year on the job of leading our Board: the election of a new Headmaster.

The young (36-year-old) T. Chandler Hardwick was the unanimous choice to be our new Head of School. Chan and his wife, Monie, took the helm in June 1989. Their leadership, character, energy, scholarship, ability to attract needed resources and love for our school would set the Academy on its remarkable renaissance. Chan would lead the school for 24 years, second only to the 29-year tenure of Dr. John C. Sharpe.

Yes, “bricks and mortar” were a vital part of Blair’s success. Bogle Hall, opened in 1989—and named for my beloved parents—was Blair’s first new “schoolhouse” since 1899, when Clinton Hall was built. (About time!) The building of the Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts (1997) and Annie (Ann Siegel) Hall (1999) followed.

The Arts Center and Annie Hall were part of a long-range strategic plan, perhaps Blair’s first such effort. It was launched in 1986 by a group of Trustees and faculty members who met in Hope, New Jersey. We were beginning to plan our future, and in 1993, architect Lo-Yi Chan created a master plan for our campus. The Arts Center and Annie Hall fit nicely into their predetermined places. Imagine our campus without these landmarks!

When I became Chairman, the endowment totaled $12 million. When I stepped down to become Chairman Emeritus in 2001, the total had leapt to $46 million. The elusive chimera of financial independence was within our grasp! (Today, the endowment totals $88 million.) The “secret sauce” of Blair Academy, then, did not consist of a single ingredient. It was composed of multiple ingredients that mixed tradition, leadership, resources, construction, innovation, dedication and just plain hard work. (Don’t knock it!)
protected and enhanced. Time and changing tastes take their toll. If we are to attract and retain not only the students who come here to study and learn but the administrators and faculty who teach here, live here and set our academic tone, Blair must not only follow but lead in facilities. (If you haven’t yet seen our new “wireless” campus with all those poles and wires removed, see it now!)

Space—good space for working in groups or for thinking in solitary—is essential. Space for the arts gives our campus an extra vibrancy. Our splendid Timken Library (totally rebuilt in 1998) houses a vast collection of books that are the, well, spine of independent learning. Better space for sports also followed, with Tracy Hall in 1993 and our splendid new Blair Commons and field house, Hardwick Hall, in 2008.

Blair, finally, is about helping our students leave here as better scholars, better members of the community and better citizens than they might otherwise have become. If we are to attract these students, friendly, contemporary space is essential. And providing financial support to promising young men and women with great potential allows us to add value to our student mix. (I confess that I’m enormously proud of the 150 students who have so far been supported by Bogle Brothers Scholarships over the years.)

Q. What is Blair’s greatest challenge now?

A. That’s an easy one. Blair’s renaissance began with the enthusiasm and commitment of former Board Chairman (1962-1978) Dr. J. Brooks Hoffman ’36, the unsung hero who preserved our school’s continued existence during a dark period. Despite a few bumps and some pretty tough times along the way, we’ve marched onward and upward ever since.

As members of the Blair family, we all must meet the challenge of maintaining the extraordinary momentum we now enjoy and building on it. After Alexander Pope, “Be not the first by whom the new is tried, yet not the last to lay the old aside.” We live in a rapidly changing world. But we must preserve the great traditions that began at Blair Academy in 1848, 167 years ago.

What it will take is caring—a sense of caring about this Academy—by those who govern it (our Trustees), those who work for it (our leaders and teachers and administrators), those who are served by it (our students), those who have been served by it in the past (our alumni), many of whom have had their lives changed by it (I’m one. I shall never forget it!), and by all of those who love it. Enlisting the entire Blair family in that mission of caring is our greatest challenge.

WILLIAM R. TIMKEN ’53

Q. What aspect of Blair’s growth over the past three decades makes you most proud?

A. This has been a defining time in the School’s history. While Blair had always been a good school, over the past 30 years, it has become a great school, and I am proud of the substantial and dramatic change in mindset that has resulted from Blair’s tremendous growth. Today, students, parents, alumni, friends and
prospective families recognize Blair as a school on the move.

I personally attribute much of the transformation that occurred during this period to the dedication and leadership of Chan and Monie Hardwick. Their drive and determination were absolutely instrumental to Blair’s becoming the school it is today. The Hardwicks understood the private-school concept, understood how a private-school experience could help young people become the best they could be, understood how important it was to have a diverse student body. Most of all, they saw Blair’s potential, and both Chan and Monie were leadership builders who helped others see that vision and doers who worked tirelessly to get the job done.

**Q.** During and in the years surrounding your Board Chairmanship (2001-2006), the School dedicated significant resources to infrastructure, developing plans for an impressive athletic facility (Hardwick Hall) and transforming Memorial Hall into new academic space (Timken Library). Why was it important for Blair to expand and repurpose facilities at that particular juncture in its history?

**A.** Our campus has always been a beautiful place with its many historic buildings, but it was important for Blair to improve our infrastructure during the 1990s and early 2000s for two main reasons: First, we needed space to accommodate expanded teaching and learning opportunities; and second, we needed to be more competitive with peer schools, most of which, by the way, had much greater financial resources than Blair.

The teaching and learning opportunities made possible by such facilities as Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts, Timken Library and Hardwick Hall have dramatically increased Blair’s capacity...
to successfully bring students through and help them be the best they can be. The well-designed, modern buildings that house these great programs have significantly raised Blair’s visibility and standing with prospective families and alumni—you can’t help but get excited when you see our athletic fields, arts facilities and Hardwick Hall. You really won’t find better anywhere else!

Of course, all of this facility expansion required Blair to raise significant capital, and that was no easy task. Blair never had a large endowment, nor had it raised funds much beyond those needed to keep the School in operation. This strategic plan to improve infrastructure and strengthen opportunities for our students reinvigorated Blair’s entire philanthropic process. I credit Monie Hardwick, during her years as director of development, with leading fundraising efforts. The largesse of major benefactors established a firm foundation, but, over the years, many Blair alumni, parents and friends have become much more energized and motivated to give to the School to help it prosper. Of course, Blair must continue to actively raise funds every year to support educational opportunities for our students. The School’s higher visibility and standing certainly help us now and going forward.

Q. What is Blair’s greatest challenge now?

A. Simply put, Blair’s greatest challenge is to keep the momentum alive and growing! Over the past 30 years, the growth of the School has ignited loyalty and commitment among parents, alumni and friends that didn’t exist anywhere near this level before. Many alumni consider sending their own children to Blair, making the School a family legacy—this is a wonderful thing! It is imperative that we nurture and strengthen this commitment. We are on the right track, and every member of the Blair family—Trustees, administrators, alumni, parents and friends—needs to make it his or her singular job to keep our School moving forward.
George Jenkins’ parents decided it would be a good idea for their young son to establish a firm foundation—academically and athletically—before venturing off to college. The School’s ties to the Presbyterian Church made it a natural choice for the family, who were Presbyterian themselves. Though his time at Blair was brief, George made his mark quickly, playing a key role on the varsity tennis team and graduating at the top of his class at the age of 17. He went on to attend Princeton University and earned his MBA at Harvard University before returning to serve on Blair’s Board of Trustees in 1959. George was elected Chairman of the Board in 1978, a position he held until 1986, and his impressive accomplishments during that tenure earned him Blair’s highest honor, the Citation of Merit, in 1996. George and his wife, Marian, who graciously shared his devotion to his alma mater, visited campus frequently and endeared themselves to the community throughout their many years of service.

Two of George’s sons, James P. Jenkins ’66 and Robert N. Jenkins ’69, followed their father’s path to Blair and carried on the family’s tradition of generous service and philanthropic support as Trustees, and in Jim’s case, as Chairman of the Board from 2006 to 2013. Jim recalls a conversation he had with his father before assuming this leadership role, in which the elder Jenkins outlined two goals he deemed critical for the School’s future success: restructuring its covenant agreement with the Presbyterian Church and acquiring land bordering campus, such as the adjacent Girl Scout property.

During Jim’s tenure as Board Chairman, the School accomplished those objectives. Trustees and administrators also began discussing another purchase that would change the boundaries of campus in 2014: the acquisition of Park Street, which comprises several faculty residences and both of the School’s main entrances.

Jenkins Brothers Continue Family Legacy With New Scholarship

George P. Jenkins ’32 spent a single year at Blair, which marked the beginning of the Jenkins family’s long and dedicated relationship with the School.
Clearly, the influence of the Jenkins family on Blair Academy will be felt for many generations to come. When George passed away in 2009, he left a legacy that his sons continued to carry out as members of the Board. To further honor their father’s impact, they have since decided to establish a scholarship in his memory.

“During a time when many families were still struggling in the aftermath of the Great Depression, my father was lucky enough to attend Blair for a year, thanks to the support of my grandfather,” noted Jim. “It seemed fitting to honor him by establishing a scholarship that would make a Blair education possible for another qualified young student.”

The George P. Jenkins ’32 Scholarship will be awarded for the first time in fall 2015. The Jenkins brothers hope that scholarship recipients will take advantage of their Blair experience, as their father did, and one day share their family’s loyalty to the School, which began with George, more than 80 years ago.

With the successful realization of George’s vision for the School, and in conjunction with the family’s many other contributions to Blair, the Jenkins family’s impact continues to shape Blair’s history and future.

The George P. Jenkins ’32 Scholarship was established in 2014 by George’s sons James P. Jenkins ’66 (Blair Trustee since 1992 and former Board Chair) and Robert N. Jenkins ’69 (Blair Trustee 1986-1992) by adding to gifts made in memory of their father, who passed away in 2009. Though Mr. Jenkins attended Blair for just one year, he remained loyal to the School throughout his entire life, devoting much of his time and personal resources to advancing Blair’s mission. He was a member of the Board of Trustees from 1959 to 1986 and served as Chairman from 1978 to 1986. The George P. Jenkins ’32 Prize, awarded each year to the speaker of the graduating class at commencement, was named in George’s honor when he retired as Chairman of the Board. Mr. Jenkins was himself the valedictorian of the class of 1932 before attending Princeton University and later earning his MBA from Harvard University. Throughout his long and successful business career, Mr. Jenkins remained dedicated to his family and displayed extraordinary devotion to Blair.

In honor of their father’s legacy at Blair, the members of the Jenkins family intend this scholarship to be used to support a deserving young student who would not otherwise be able to afford a Blair education. Their hope is that the recipients of this scholarship will take advantage of the Blair experience to pursue their interests and that they will one day share their family’s loyalty to the School.

Robert and George with the Jenkins’ family’s youngest generation.

Jenkins Family Timeline

1959 George P. Jenkins ’32 elected to Board of Trustees
1976 James P. Jenkins ’66 joins Alumni Board of Governors
1978 George P. Jenkins ’32 elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees (1978-1986)
1984 Jenkins House named in honor of George P. Jenkins ’32
1986 Robert N. Jenkins ’69 elected to Board of Trustees (1986-1992)
1989 Bogle Hall Mathematics Room named
1992 James P. Jenkins ’66 elected to Board of Trustees
1996 George P. Jenkins ’32 receives Citation of Merit, Blair’s highest recognition
2004 James P. Jenkins ’66 receives Citation of Merit
2006 James P. Jenkins ’66 elected Chairman of the Board
2006 James P. Jenkins ’66 helps establish the Class of ’66 Scholarship in honor of his 50th reunion
1998 Library Reference Area given by Jenkins Family
2012 James P. Jenkins ’66 declares bequest to the School
2013 James P. Jenkins ’66 receives special citation honoring his distinguished leadership as Chairman of the Board (2006-2013)
2014 Jenkins brothers establish the George P. Jenkins ’32 Scholarship in memory of their father
Every Gift Matters—To Our Students

The Blair experience is a powerful and unique educational opportunity that impacts our students long after graduation. Challenging college-preparatory academics; myriad athletic, arts, leadership and service opportunities; dynamic community life; top-notch facilities on a historic and beautiful campus; and most of all, a faculty dedicated to our students are all part of Blair’s distinctive offerings.

Every year, loyal Blair donors support the Blair experience for today’s students and future generations through their gifts to the School. This year is no exception. The School continues to raise critical funds for these initiatives, and we rely on the support of our alumni, parents and friends. Every gift matters, and every gift benefits Blair students.

The Blair Fund

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** The Blair Fund strengthens learning opportunities for today’s students. Extracurricular programs, service and leadership opportunities, and scholarship aid are among the everyday, critical needs supported by the Blair Fund.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** $2.4 million by June 30, 2015.

New Dormitories

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** The mid-summer 2015 completion of two new dormitories will facilitate the enrollment of an equal number of boys and girls, provide quality residential housing for faculty, and enhance Blair’s admission profile among prospective families.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** $15 million in gifts or pledges.
Blair LEADS

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** Blair LEADS (Leadership, Engagement, Awareness, Decision-making, Service) is a signature leadership-education initiative designed to teach students to become globally engaged citizens. Cross-curricular coursework in effective communication, ethical decision-making and meaningful public service instills leadership skills at every grade level.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** $3 million to endow this program.

Global Service Initiatives

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** This program is an element of Blair LEADS that encourages students to interact with people of other cultures and countries through meaningful service opportunities. Students gain transformative life experience as they apply classroom lessons to real-world situations and challenges.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** Our goal is to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in service travel during their time at Blair.

Endowed Scholarships

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** The Blair community is immeasurably enriched by students of diverse backgrounds who are able to attend the School with the assistance of scholarship aid. Competitive awards are given to qualified students truly deserving of financial assistance.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** A named, endowed scholarship can be established with a gift of $100,000. This year, Blair’s 114 named scholarships and four scholars programs, combined with general support from the endowment and the Blair Fund, provided more than $5.8 million in scholarship aid to 40 percent of the student body.

General Endowment

**BENEFIT TO STUDENTS:** We invest unrestricted endowment gifts in our most valuable resources—our teachers, students and campus. These funds allow us to better compensate our outstanding faculty, increase student scholarship aid, and maintain our historic buildings and beautiful grounds.

**FINANCIAL OBJECTIVE:** Our goal is to grow our $88-million endowment to more than $100 million, so we can become less reliant on tuition for general operating expenses and better secure the School’s financial future.
Construction crews made substantial progress this winter on the two new dormitories overlooking Blair Lake, turning the maze of steel beams, cables and sheetrock into recognizable buildings that will open mid-summer.

Despite occasional heavy snowfall and record-cold temperatures, work on the buildings continued without hiatus over the winter months. Tractor trailers delivering endless pallets of slate-gray bricks became a common sight and, one by one, the beautiful stones slowly transformed the School’s newest additions into stately structures that complement the historic campus.

The new dormitories—one for upper-school boys and one for girls—are on schedule to be completed by July, just in time for residential faculty to move in and get settled before the official opening of Blair’s 168th school year. The dormitories accomplish several important objectives: They allow the School to achieve greater gender equity in the student body, enhance Blair’s admission profile among prospective families, and enable Blair to attract and retain the very best residential teaching faculty.

The six faculty apartments housed within the new dorms played an important role in the design process, noted Blair’s Chief Operating Officer Jim Frick. “The residential experience is where it all starts; our kids build strong relationships with faculty members in the dormitories and across the community, which helps them to thrive in the classroom, on stage and on the athletic fields.”

Fundraising for the buildings has nearly reached its goal. According to Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall, the School has received more than $14 million in gifts and pledges toward the $15-million total cost of the project. “Alumni, parents and friends of the School have all contributed to this important project, and we are grateful for each donor’s generous support.”

Formal dedication of the dormitories will take place in October 2015, when the community will gather to recognize many of Blair’s most loyal supporters and celebrate their positive impact on the Blair community. Coverage of the opening of the new dorms will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.
Maria G. Vinci-Savettiere brings to Blair’s Board of Trustees an extensive background in corporate law and valuable experience in non-profit management, including financial planning, marketing strategy, donor relations and special-events coordination. She and her husband, Greg, reside in Chester, New Jersey, with their son, Michael Savettiere ’17.

Ms. Savettiere graduated from American University in 1984 with a bachelor’s degree in international relations and earned her JD from Washington University in 1987. She worked as a senior staff attorney for Hughes Network Systems, Inc., where she was responsible for international contract negotiations. She also served as assistant vice president and counsel to New York Life Worldwide Holdings for a brief period in 1994, before serving as an independent legal and business advisor to multiple well-known clients, including TGIFriday’s Restaurants, Telecom Applications Corporation and GTE Spacenet, among others.

Since 1995, Ms. Savettiere has acted as general counsel to Landice Treadmills, a company founded by her husband, Greg Savettiere, which manufactures high-end treadmills, ellipticals and exercise bikes.

In 2003, she became executive director of Deirdre’s House in Morristown, New Jersey, where she puts her legal and business expertise to work on behalf of victims of child abuse and neglect. Deirdre’s House is a nationally recognized child-advocacy center and is the only site in Morris County that offers comprehensive services to child-abuse victims, including medical examinations and treatment, law-enforcement interviews, clinical counseling, and trial preparation.

“Maria’s broad array of experience in both corporate law and non-profit management make her an excellent addition to our Board of Trustees, and we are delighted to have her join our team,” said Chairman of the Board Doug Kimmelman P’12 ’13 ’15.
Blair wrestlers captured Prep State and Prep National championships in a stellar season. Brandon Dallavia ’16 is ranked seventh in the nation at 160 pounds.

Bre Cavanaugh ’15 led the girls’ varsity basketball team to its fifth-consecutive MAPL and state titles.

(Right) Cameron Kurtz ’16, pictured with Coach Doug Compton, worked hard to bring his game to the next level.

Grace Middleton ’16 set new School records; Will Robinson ’16 helped lead the boys’ swim team to a 6-2-1 record.

Bre Cavanaugh ’15 (left) will play for UC Berkeley next year, while Andra Espinoza-Hunter ’17 has committed to UConn.

Swim team captain Elizabeth Sexton ’15.

Winter track runners (left to right) Coach Latta Browse, Katie Peacock ’18, Morgan Molesworth ’17, Devyn Saylor ’16 and Joshua Shaw ’16 headed outside whenever they could.

The girls’ squash team, including (right) Zaynah Karem ’16, finished with a strong 12-4 record.

Elijah Burns ’15 helped lead the boys’ varsity basketball team to a 19-7 overall record and its eighth MAPL title in the past 16 years.

Haley Chrobock ’15, Blair’s top skier, finished the season ranked second in the state.
Winter Season of Outstanding Performances
Punctuated by New Records & Reclaimed Titles

Skiing
The boys’ ski team attributes its success this winter to key racers Justin Swirbul ’16, Jason Newman ’17, Justin Ernsting ’15, E.J. Hrabarchuk ’16, Adam Dericks ’17, Ned Sigety ’16, Patrick Donaghy ’18 and Jack Saxton ’17. The team had a number of second-, third- and fourth-place giant slalom and slalom finishes. The Bucs placed third overall at the state finals, a two-race event that included stand-out performances from Blair athletes.

The girls’ ski team went into the winter season defending the state championship title and got off to a powerful start, winning the first three giant slalom races and carrying a record of 20-0 into the second half of the regular season. Thanks to the skill of key racers Haley Chrobock ’15, Sophie Shoemake ’15, Natalie Martin ’15, Emmila Hastings Gazo ’17, Katie Ix ’16 and Eleni Kedros ’16, the Bucs placed first in all giant slalom races and placed fifth at Festival Race, finishing second overall at the state championship in late February.

The season ended for both the boys’ and girls’ ski teams at the Race of Champions (ROC), a contest in which the top 75 skiers in New Jersey competed. Among the Blair skiers to qualify were Justin Swirbul ’16 (who placed sixth in the ROC slalom and finished the season ranked 10th in New Jersey) and Haley Chrobock ’15 (who finished second in both the ROC slalom and giant slalom, and finished the season ranked second in the state).

Squash
The boys’ squash team ended the season with a 9-12 record, following the 2014 graduation of a number of top-ranked players. Although unable to play all season due to a knee injury, co-captain S.J. Lee ’15 served as an active role model for players, helping Blake Small ’15, Griffin Fitzgerald ’17, Harry Moore ’17 and William Pemberton ’16 bring their games to the next level. At one of its last competitions of the season, the team celebrated a 3-1 record at the national finals at Wesleyan University, finishing fifth in its division, as well as a third-place finish at the Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL) tournament.

Girls’ squash fared better with a season record of 12-4 and a strong showing at nationals, at which the team placed ninth in its division and won the consolation finals. Led by three captains, Emily Wan ’15, Laura Polanco ’15 and Natalie Pearson ’15, the team dedicated much of the season to honing the skills of underclass players, such as Reade von Stade ’17, whose 5-0 performance at nationals was a deciding factor in Blair’s overall score. The team placed second during the MAPL competition, losing by only 1.25 points to Lawrenceville. The season ended with three girls being selected for the all-MAPL team. Looking to next season, Coach Moore (pictured above) also expects Clio Bersani ’18 to make her mark as one of team’s strongest athletes.

Swimming
Ending the season with a mixed record of 6-2-1 for the boys and 3-5-1 for the girls, the swim team competed strongly despite struggles with illness throughout the winter.

The boys’ team owed its success in large part to swimming veterans Will Robinson ’16, Paco Rubio ’16, Bobby Tanakulthon ’17, Jovi Shum ’15, Alfred Poon ’15, Chris Berry-Toon ’17 and captain Spencer Vass ’15, as well as to younger swimmers, such as Alec Lawless ’18 and Justin Choi ’18. A number of the boys earned personal best times at the MAPL meet in early February, as well as at the prep state meet at The Lawrenceville School a week earlier. At the MAPL competition, the 200-free relay team (comprising Alfred,
Paco, Bobby and Alec) came within four-tenths of a second of breaking the School record in the event. Before the season ended, another 200-free relay team (comprising Alec, Will, Bobby and Paco) came within seven-hundredths of a second of meeting the School record.

On the girls' side, returning swimmers Catharine Berry-Toon '17, Mallory Fabey '16, Zoe Garvey '16, Grace Middleton '16, Kay O’Connor ’16, Samantha Shaw ’17, Karen Shi ’16, Casey Witte ’15 and captain Elizabeth Sexton ’15 led some promising new additions—including Natasha Baker ’17 and Sammi Hui Bon Hoa ’18—in a winter season filled with close finishes and a couple of new School records.

Grace broke her own 100-free School record at states in February, posting a time of 54.34, and achieved a new School record in the 50-free at the MAPL competition with a time of 25.07. The four students on the 200-free relay team (Elizabeth, Zoe, Karen and Grace) also entered Blair’s record books with a time of 1:47.21 at the MAPL contest. Swimmers put forth great effort at the Easterns Championships in Philadelphia, and a number of athletes recorded personal best times and broke School records during some of the season’s most exciting races in late February: At Easterns, Grace beat her previous 100-free and 50-free records, establishing new School records of 53.88 and 24.71, respectively.

Track
Blair track recorded a fine winter season, with 21 runners competing in nine meets. The team opened at The Hill School Invitational in early January, ran in two races at New York’s legendary 168th Street Armory (home of the New Balance Track and Field Hall of Fame and host of the Millrose Games), and concluded the season at the state prep championships at Lawrenceville in mid-February.

Led by senior captains Maiya Gibbs ’15 and Na’im Pretlow ’15, the team spent much of the winter training in the hallways of Bogle and Hardwick Halls, as snow and ice often forced them indoors. Despite the stretches of inclement weather that made practice difficult, Na’im and Maiya had noteworthy finishes in a series of 400-meter and 200-meter dashes, as did four-year senior Mark Jones ’15 in the 800-meter run. Sophomore Justes Nance ’17 won the long jump at The Varsity Classic at The Armory, the 55-meter dash at prep states, and, most significantly, the long jump at the Fairleigh Dickinson Field Event Festival. Justes’s record-breaking long jump of 23 feet, 7-¼ inches—the longest jump in Blair history, as well as the longest in the nation among high school athletes during the 2014-2015 season—qualified him to compete at the New Balance Indoor Nationals and the 168th Street Armory in mid-March. Before the season ended, Justes broke the MAPL indoor record, jumping 23 feet, 1-½ inches.

Wrestling
The Bucs reclaimed the national prep title at Lehigh University in late February after winning the prep state competition at home earlier in the month. Other notable wins included a 15th-consecutive team title at December’s Beast of the East tournament and January victories over St. Paris Graham, St. Edwards and Bergen Catholic, as well as winning Oklahoma’s Geary tournament (for more about Blair wrestling, head coach Brian Antonelli and the team’s season highlights, turn to page 89).
In mid-February, the girls’ varsity basketball team won its fifth-consecutive Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL) and state titles during home games against The Peddie School in front of enthusiastic Buccaneer fans. The team defeated the Falcons in the MAPL finals (65-42) on February 15 and in the New Jersey state “Prep A” championship (72-53) on February 21. This latest MAPL win brings the Lady Bucs to 48-straight victories against MAPL opponents.

Led by guard Bre Cavanaugh ’15 (headed to the University of California at Berkeley next year), Batouly Camara ’15 (who signed at the University of Kentucky), Lauren Vostal ’15 (who will play at Williams College) and Cy Lippold ’15 (headed to Dartmouth College), the team’s historic accomplishment followed competitions against a number of nationally ranked teams from New Jersey, Florida, Alabama, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia and Massachusetts over the winter months.

“It’s been an honor to work with such an amazing group of young women this year,” said Coach Quint Clarke ’87.

“During my time at Blair, this is the most talented team I have ever coached, as well as the most positive and hardworking. We didn’t have a bad practice all year, and we supported each other through the good and tough times. And, with eight championships, Bre, Batouly and Lauren will go down as some of the most successful female athletes in Blair history.”

With several of the team’s starters graduating this year, 2015-2016 will be a year of rebuilding around foundational players like Andra Espinoza-Hunter ’17, who has committed to the University of Connecticut, Coach Clarke said. “There is no way to replace these talented senior leaders, but we have some very good younger athletes who are excited for next year,” he concluded.
Boys’ Basketball Finishes Season as MAPL Champion

With an overall record of 19-7 for the year, the boys’ varsity basketball team once again brought fans to their feet with a series of exciting wins, ending the season in mid-February as the Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL) champion after a decisive 63-47 victory over The Hill School.

Attributing the team’s success in part to leading offensive contributors Elijah Burns ’15 (who is headed to the University of Notre Dame next year) and Brett Lubreski ’15 (bound for the New Jersey Institute of Technology), as well as solid all-around play from senior trio Donovan Wright ’15 (Cornell University), Tim Delaney ’15 (Villanova University) and Spencer Osborne ’15 (Emory University), Coach Joe Mantegna praised all of his players for their hard work and sportsmanship.

“This was one of the most united, selfless and dedicated groups I have ever coached,” he said. “We talked a lot about creating a ‘Sherpa’ culture—in which one man helps another to the top of the mountain without taking credit for it—and this team really bought into that philosophy and lifted each other up throughout a really competitive season.”

During the MAPL final, Elijah and Tim led the team with a combined 28 points, 18 rebounds and a daunting defensive presence that made it difficult for Hill to score. Excellent play off the bench from Spencer and Jon Nowell ’15 helped the Bucs secure the championship win—with Jon contributing three blocks, five rebounds and eight points, and Spencer scoring 14 points, including four-for-four shooting from behind the arc.

In addition to besting Hill at the MAPL final—a particularly satisfying win for the Bucs, who lost to the Rams in last year’s tournament—the boys’ varsity team beat St. Benedict’s Prep earlier in the season when the Gray Bees were ranked the 20th-best team in the nation. The Bucs also defeated Pope John XXIII Regional High School, New Jersey’s number-one team, in early February.

Finishing the season with its eighth MAPL victory in 16 years, and as runner up in the state “Prep A” championship tournament, Coach Mantegna hopes his players will carry with them the team’s philosophy, both at Blair and beyond. “At the end of the day, you forget the wins and losses,” he said. “The much more crucial piece is learning to contribute to something bigger than yourself.”

With a number of the team’s most seasoned players graduating this year, Coach Mantegna will look to underclassmen Matt Turner ’17 and Zedrek Farrell ’18 to lead the team as it welcomes new athletes in 2015-2016.
After a standout high school, postgraduate and college wrestling career, and more than a decade as a Division I college and prep school coach, Blair’s head wrestling coach Brian Antonelli ’93 knows how to prepare the Bucs for success on the mat: Study your opponent, evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and put in the hours of hard work to perfect your moves. But the key to success, he counsels his wrestlers, is to be ready for the unexpected. Coach Antonelli wants his team to take these lessons from the mat into life, too. Indeed, there have been many times in his own life when hard work, preparation and the ability to make the most of unforeseen opportunities have served him well.

A Champion on the Way to Annapolis
Coach Antonelli’s year as a Blair PG is a case in point. He came to the School in 1992 having graduated from the McDonogh School, where he was the 160-pound Maryland state wrestling champion, a two-time all-state football player and a varsity lacrosse player, enroute to the United States Naval Academy. He was part of a team of 10 postgraduate wrestlers at Blair that year, all of whom walked on to the football team. Making the most of this unexpected opportunity to play football, Coach Antonelli became quarterback of a Blair team that went 9-0 for the season and won the state championship.

“Brian’s leadership skills were evident right off the bat,” said Blair Athletic Director Jim Stone, who, in 1992, was the Bucs’ quarterback coach during his very first year at the School. “He was a tough competitor, and that trait continues to this day.”

Coach Antonelli’s competitive spirit and penchant for hard work kicked in again during his Blair wrestling season, and he became the 160-pound prep state champion under the guidance of head coach Jeff Buxton and assistant coach Jim Frick. “Our PG team wrestled college and junior college teams every weekend,” Coach Antonelli recalled. “I practiced with guys like John Leonardis ’93, became a much better wrestler and was ready to compete at the college level.”

Military Service & Leadership
As a wrestler at Division I Navy, Coach Antonelli earned varsity letters in 1996 and 1997 and received the H. McCoy Memorial Award as a senior, an honor that recognizes the midshipman who displays the “highest degree of athletic leadership and competitive spirit.” “It’s not that I was the best wrestler on the team,” Coach Antonelli remarked unpretentiously, “but I was always ready to go, in any tournament or any match. I knew that I was in for a lot of hard work both on the mat and off at the Naval Academy, but I also knew it was worth it. When you graduate from USNA, you land solidly on your feet, prepared to serve and lead.”

Coach Brian Antonelli: ‘The Right Man for the Job’
Coach Antonelli was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the Marine Corps in May 1997, and he spent the next year training at The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia, and aviation maintenance school in Pensacola, Florida. In 1998, he and his wife, Susie, were married at their alma mater, the McDonogh School, and they settled at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina.

For the next four years, Coach Antonelli supervised helicopter maintenance as the materials maintenance control officer (MMCO) for HMM-266 in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and for the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), which deployed to the Mediterranean Sea. He intended to transition to civilian life in 2002, but an unexpected opportunity to serve as an admission officer at the Naval Academy proved to be a better option, and one that would have a major impact on his coaching career.

**Coaching With the Best**

Coach Antonelli remained in the Marine Corps for three more years, during which time he returned to his Navy wrestling roots. In addition to his Naval Academy admission duties, he became a volunteer coach and officer representative for the Midshipman wrestling team and worked closely with Navy’s nationally and internationally respected wrestling head coach, former Oklahoma State head assistant coach Bruce Burnett.

“Coach Burnett has had a huge impact on my career and my life as a whole,” Coach Antonelli said. “In addition to his technical wrestling expertise, he had a way of bringing out the best in each athlete. He interacted with team members as individuals and asked the right questions to help each wrestler do what he needed to reach his highest potential.” The experience of working with Coach Burnett helped shape Coach Antonelli’s coaching style, but more than that, the career guidance and personal advice he received from Coach Burnett have proven invaluable. Coach Antonelli summed it up succinctly: “I owe him a lot.”

**Building a Coaching Resume**

In 2005, The Lawrenceville School offered Coach Antonelli his first head-coaching opportunity, and the Antonelli family, which now included daughters Katie and Sammie, transitioned to civilian life. They took up residence in New Jersey, and Coach Antonelli went to work as Lawrenceville’s quarterback and football special teams coach, while also serving as athletic liaison for admission and wrestling head coach. In his first year, he helped mold two New Jersey prep state champions and one All-American. The Antonelli’s son, Chris, was born in 2006, and the family had settled into a “good life at a great school,” when Coach Burnett at Navy called with an offer of an assistant head coaching position. “It was a tough decision to leave Lawrenceville since we were really building that program,” Coach Antonelli recalled, “but the chance to work with Coach Burnett was too good an opportunity to pass up.”

The Antonellis returned to Annapolis and remained there for eight years. In that time, Coach Antonelli played an instrumental role in recruiting Navy wrestlers, bringing in three All-Americans in one year, including two-time All-American (2009, 2011) and four-time NCAA qualifier Bryce Saddoris, who became the Mids’ all-time winningest wrestler in 2011. When Coach Burnett announced his retirement in 2013, Coach Antonelli took the program’s helm, becoming Navy’s interim head coach for the 2013-2014 season.

**Back to Blair: A Commitment to Excellence**

Last spring, when Athletic Director Jim Stone contacted Coach Antonelli about the possibility of becoming Blair’s head wrestling coach, the timing couldn’t have been better. The Antonelli family, which now included their youngest son, Mikey, was ready for a change, and both Coach and Mrs. Antonelli appreciated the opportunity to return to a boarding-school environment. “We knew Blair was a great school with a close-knit community, and it was a place our family would feel at home,” said Coach

“It takes hard work to prepare for a season or a match, but I caution the kids that the unexpected will happen. They need to make the most of whatever situation they find themselves in and give it their best shot, on and off the mat.”

—Coach Antonelli
Antonelli. The other essential factor in his decision to return to Blair is that wrestling is important to the School. “Blair teachers, students and alumni realize that wrestling is a huge part of team members’ lives in terms of character development and commitment to something bigger than themselves.”

How does wrestling at Blair today compare to Coach Antonelli’s PG days? “For one thing,” he noted, “the physical facilities have more than doubled, which is great for the School. But something that has not changed is that kids here want to win. That drive has to exist if the wrestlers are going to be successful—I can’t want to win for them. My job, then, is to get them where they want to be.” To do so, Coach Antonelli meets with every wrestler at the start of the season to define their goals and map a strategy to meet them.

Here again, nothing has changed. “It takes hard work to prepare for a season or a particular match, but I caution the kids that the unexpected will happen. Even when you think you have all the bases covered, things still won’t always go right. But they need to make the most of whatever situation they find themselves in and give it their best shot, on and off the mat.”

Goal: Top Ranking for Blair Wrestling
Coach Antonelli has set a goal for himself as the School’s head wrestling coach: Keep Blair Academy’s wrestling program at the top of the national rankings. “I wouldn’t say that if we didn’t have the ability, but at Blair, we do. The program is supported in every way by the School, and we have top athletes here who are committed to being the best. We can definitely keep Blair on top.”

Mr. Stone has been impressed with Coach Antonelli’s accomplishments since he joined the faculty last June. “He developed great rapport with our wrestlers and helped them achieve at a high level from the get-go,” he said. “We know we have the right man for the job.”

Sage Advice for Life
This spring, Coach Antonelli will watch his first class of Blair graduates head to some of the most prestigious universities and wrestling programs in the nation, but if they follow his advice, they will be prepared for life beyond college, too. “Eventually, these kids will hang up their wrestling shoes, and after that, another whole chapter starts. I want them to take the lessons of hard work and commitment they learned on the mat and become good citizens, husbands and fathers. I want them to get meaningful jobs and become leaders in their professional lives and in their communities. But always,” he reiterated, “be prepared for the unexpected”—and be ready to make the most of it.

2014-2015 Blair Wrestling Highlights

- The Bucs earned their 15th-consecutive team title at December’s Beast of the East tournament. **Jordan Kutler ’15** (152 pounds) and **Matt Kolodzik ’15** (138) both earned gold medals at the tournament, while nine of Blair’s 12 entries placed in the top eight, and each wrestler earned at least one victory.

- Blair won the Geary Invitational Tournament in Oklahoma, the nation’s oldest invitational tournament. Five Bucs earned gold medals: **Zach Sherman ’17** (113), **Matt Kolodzik ’15** (138), **Jordan Kutler ’15** (152), **Chase Singletary ’17** (182) and **David Showunmi ’15** (220).

- Blair defeated wrestling powerhouses St. Paris Graham, St. Edward and Bergen Catholic.

- Blair won the New Jersey Prep State tournament at home on February 18, defeating Lawrenceville and St. Benedict’s Prep.

- With four National Prep champions, eight finalists and 13 place winners overall, Blair captured the 2015 National Prep wrestling title on February 28 at Lehigh University, defeating Wyoming Seminary 283 to 269.5. **Charles Tucker ’15** (126), **Matt Kolodzik ’15** (138), **Jordan Kutler ’15** (152) and **David Showunmi ’15** (220) were champions in their respective weight classes.

- Blair finished the season ranked second out of more than 10,000 high school wrestling programs in the country. Throughout a demanding schedule, the Bucs won every tournament except Ironman, at which they placed second, and every dual meet except their late-season encounter with Wyoming Seminary, which they beat at both Ironman and National Preps.

- Seven individual Blair wrestlers earned national ranking this season, the most of any high school wrestling program in the country: **Zach Sherman ’17** (#15 at 113), **Charles Tucker ’15** (#8 at 132; headed to Cornell University), **Matt Kolodzik ’15** (#2 at 138; headed to Princeton University), **Jordan Kutler ’15** (#3 at 152; headed to Lehigh University), **Brandon Dallavia ’16** (#7 at 160), **Chase Singletary ’17** (#14 at 182) and **David Showunmi ’15** (#6 at 220; headed to Stanford University).
One of Blair’s best ambassadors throughout his busy life, David Wakefield ’48 never lost sight of his high school alma mater. A gentle, humble man with a keen business sense and a knack for connecting with people, Dave’s warm personality and strong devotion to the School embody the same characteristics that draw families to Blair’s close-knit community year after year.

A “six-year man,” Dave entered Blair in 1942 at a tumultuous time in America’s history. Looking back, he remembers his boarding-school experience with fondness, recalling the time he and his friends scaled the water tower to paint “Beat Peddie” in large letters on the eve of the big athletic competition. Of course, he supplemented such shenanigans with a commitment to classroom learning and, in the process, learned a lot about relationships and how to get along with people—a skill that no doubt contributed to his personal and professional success.

“Because of Blair,” he said, “I was better prepared for college academically and equipped to live away from home.”

After attending the College of William and Mary, he met his bride, Carolyn “Lee” Bradley, with whom he raised two children, Ellen and David Jr. He went on to earn his MBA from New York University and enjoyed a long and rewarding banking career with J.P. Morgan that lasted nearly four decades.

In 2006, Dave and Lee made the decision to include Blair in their estate plans. “It made sense at the time for a lot of reasons,” he explained, “not the least of which was a change in the tax laws that allowed individuals to make charitable contributions directly from retirement accounts.” Dave also held a unique vantage point from his work as a Trustee, leading the Board’s development committee and serving as Chairman of the Ever, Always Campaign, which culminated in the construction of Hardwick Hall, as well as the new outdoor athletic facilities and pedestrian campus. “In my role as Trustee, it was easy for me to see the many possibilities that planned gifts provide to the School through strengthening the endowment,” he noted, “and I never mind raising money for a cause in which I believe.”

With that conviction in mind, two years later, Dave used the occasion of his 60th reunion to talk with his classmates about the ease of charitable giving from retirement savings. He remarked, “As Blair becomes increasingly competitive and academically more challenging, it remains a mid-sized boarding school where students and faculty interact closely in a friendly, caring community. I believe that strong faculty lie at the heart of the School’s success and, simply put, planned gifts help grow the endowment to ensure that the School succeeds in its mission to educate the whole person.”

Wise words spoken by a seasoned professional, generous benefactor and tireless advocate of the School—a man Blair is exceedingly proud to call one of its own.
Edward M. Sabol
A Blairstown native, Mr. Sabol attended Blair for two years and excelled as an athlete, best-known for his swimming prowess. As a senior, he set a world interscholastic record for the 100-yard freestyle event and earned an athletic scholarship to The Ohio State University. Selected to the 1936 U.S. Olympic team, he refused to swim before Hitler in Nazi Germany. He was also a member of the varsity football and track teams and served as president of the Blair Academy Players. Known as “Big Ed” to his family and friends, Mr. Sabol acted on Broadway and served in the U.S. Army during World War II, before going to work as a sales representative for his father-in-law’s menswear factory in Philadelphia.

He met his wife, Audrey, at a camp in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, where he was the camp counselor of Audrey’s brother, Herbert J. Siegel ’46, a loyal Blair benefactor. Eager to escape his job as a sales representative, Mr. Sabol used his passion and skill as an amateur cinematographer and eventually founded NFL Films. He served as president of NFL Films until 1985 and continued as chairman until his retirement in 1995. NFL Films won 52 Emmy awards during his tenure, and Mr. Sabol was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame and to the Swimming, Broadcasting and Jewish halls of fame. He is predeceased by his son, Steve, and is survived by his wife, Audrey, his daughter, Blair, and a grandson.

Stanley E. Smith Jr.
A lieutenant in the medical corps during World War II, Dr. Smith served in both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force. After one year at Blair, he pursued his study of medicine at Cornell University, training in obstetrics and gynecology in both New York and Virginia. He practiced obstetrics and gynecology at the Carle Clinic in Urbana, Illinois, for 33 years and was a member of the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the Illinois State Medical Association and the American Fertility Association. He is survived by his wife, Marie, two children and five grandchildren.
In MEMORIAM

1941
Joseph R. Ackerman
Dr. Ackerman attended Blair for one year before matriculating at Rutgers University. Described in the 1941 ACTA as an unassuming and quiet student, he earned his medical degree from New York Medical College. Having served in Korea as a U.S. Army health officer, he returned as a captain and established his own private medical practice. Upon the death of his first wife, Beverly, he married his college sweetheart, Edith Stacy. As doctor and nurse, the two served patients together until 1988. Dr. Ackerman loved to read and was an avid student of history. He is survived by Edith, his wife of 43 years, and a stepdaughter, as well as three children from his first marriage, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

1943
Arthur H. Dube
A two-year Blair student, Dr. Dube enjoyed writing articles for The Breeze and was known for his sarcastic wit. He was also an accomplished wrestler, soccer player and golfer. He began his medical training during the World War II-era V-12 program at the University of Rochester, studied at Indiana University and finished his training at the University of Michigan and in Syracuse. He also served in the Navy during the Korean War. A pioneer in diabetes care, Dr. Dube practiced in Syracuse for 35 years, serving as the medical director of the Van Dyne Home and Hospital and St. Camillus Health and Rehabilitation Center. In retirement, he enjoyed playing golf and traveling. Dr. Dube is predeceased by his first wife, Dorothy Albright Dube, a daughter and a stepdaughter. He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Patricia Dube, her two children and two children from his first marriage. He is also survived by 15 grandchildren and a great-grandson.

John C. Hulsizer
Mr. Hulsizer was a member of the track team, glee club and band during his three years at Blair. An honor-roll student, his classmates admired his skills as a pianist. He served in the U.S. Navy and earned his bachelor’s degree from Iowa State University. He began his professional career at General Electric and worked for IBM Corp. for 32 years, retiring in 1987. Mr. Hulsizer enjoyed playing piano and organ for his church and was also involved in the Rochester Civic Theater. He is survived by his wife, Jenni, seven children, 16 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. A beloved family man, he was predeceased by his parents, both members of Blair’s class of 1903, and his two brothers, William R. Hulsizer ’32 and James E. Hulsizer ’34.

1946
James G. Cretekos
Mr. Cretekos spent one year at Blair and played football. He graduated in January and joined the Army, later earning his bachelor’s degree from the University of Buffalo and his master’s degree from St. Bonaventure University. He was a chemistry professor at the State University of New York at Alfred. A lifelong resident of Wellsville, New York, he served his community as mayor of the village, election commissioner for Allegany County, trustee of Jones Memorial Hospital and founding organizer of the Hellenic Invitational Golf Tournament. Predeceased by his wife, Ann, he is survived by five children and 10 grandchildren.

1948
J. Frederick Friden
A student at Blair for six years, Mr. Friden played football, sang in the choir and earned honor roll distinctions. He attended Keystone College where he met his wife, Shirley, and earned his engineering certificate from Rutgers University. A mechanical engineer by trade, Mr. Friden owned and operated a successful land surveying business and was named Pennsylvania Surveyor of the Year in 2006. Described by his family and friends as a gadgeteer, philosopher and deft storyteller, he was known for his sense of humor, sage advice and rugged individuality. His hobbies included fishing and hunting, and he was a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association. He also served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Mr. Friden is predeceased by his wife of 54 years, Shirley, and is survived by two children and six grandchildren.

1950
Peter Jacobsen
A one-year Blair student, Mr. Jacobsen was a member of the ski club and the leadership honor society Omicron Kappa Delta. He worked for SE Accounting & Tax Group, Inc. and is survived by his wife, Beverly, and three children.

Stuart H. Loory
According to the 1948 ACTA, Mr. Loory made a name for himself as soon as he arrived at Blair, serving as editor of The Breeze. The renowned journalist and CNN executive attended Cornell University, where he was editor of the student newspaper, before earning his master’s degree in journalism from Columbia University. A White House correspondent for several major newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times during the 1960s and 1970s, he also taught journalism at The Ohio State University and was a managing editor at the Chicago Sun-Times before helping to build CNN. Known as an extremely capable, tough and independent journalist, he authored several books and delivered a lecture to Blair students as part of the Society of Skeptics program while his grandson, Konstantin Tarasov ’13, was a student on campus. In 1986, he introduced Dr. Martin Miller and a group of his history students to a preeminent Russian journalist when the group visited Moscow during the Cold War. His brother, Melvyn A. Loory, graduated from Blair in 1955. Mr. Loory is survived by his second wife, Nina, three children, a stepson and eight grandchildren.

Frank L. Serpico Sr.
An army enlistee prior to attending Blair for two years, Mr. Serpico was known for his sense of humor and athleticism. He played football under Coach Steve Kuk and was an outstanding catcher for the
baseball team. He attended the University of Delaware on a football scholarship and earned a master's degree in education from the University of Georgia and an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania. He spent his career serving in the military, first as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army on assignments in Taiwan, Vietnam, Germany and the U.S., and then as a colonel in his final assignment as commander of ROTC Region I. Upon retiring from the military, he lived and worked in Saudi Arabia as an advisor to the Saudi Arabia National Guard before returning to live in the United States. Always a strong proponent of civic engagement, Mr. Serpico is survived by his wife, Marilyn, three children, two grandchildren, three stepchildren and five step-grandchildren.

1953

Thomas W. Hoff
Mr. Hoff attended Blair for two years and was a member of the projection engineers, the dramatics club and the cross country team. He earned both a bachelor's degree and master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania and enjoyed a long and successful career at Roche Laboratories, first as a sales representative, and then as vice president of advertising and promotion. An active community volunteer, Mr. Hoff founded the Twin Lakes Conservancy in Shohola, Pennsylvania. He also served as a member of the Preservation Trust of Pike County, the Milford Enhancement Committee, the Milford Water Authority and the First Presbyterian Church of Milford. As a member of the School's John C. Sharpe Society, Mr. Hoff attended many reunions and alumni gatherings with his classmates. He is survived by his wife, Jean, two children and two grandchildren.

Sterling B. Withington Jr.
Hailing from Michigan, Mr. Withington played football and golf during his one year at Blair. A graduate of Cornell University, where he earned his BS in economics and his MBA, he worked at Republic Aviation, the New York World's Fair and the Chrysler Corporation. As a private pilot and entrepreneur, he enjoyed a lifetime of pleasure flying, international vacations and several unique business ventures, including a dating service, tax preparation, air freight, real estate investment and marine salvage. He also served in the Army Reserves. He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Mary.

1954

David J. Dwyer
A two-year Blair student, Mr. Dwyer, known as “Jerry” to his classmates, attended Syracuse University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in science and a mechanical engineering degree. At Blair, he was a member of the camera and dramatics clubs. A researcher at MIT for 10 years, he worked for General Electric and retired from the Sylvania Corporation. His hobbies included golf, swimming and gardening. His niece, Laura Hillenbrand, authored two popular, well-known novels: Sea Biscuit and Unbroken. Mr. Dwyer is survived by his wife, Joan.

Edgar Llorens
Mr. Llorens, nicknamed Gary, attended Blair for four years. He was a member of the Blue and White Key and the varsity wrestling team. He also played JV baseball. A graduate of Cornell University, he pursued a career in finance and worked for UBS Financial Service, formerly Paine Webber, in his native country of Puerto Rico. Known for his passion for bonsai, he maintained a collection of over 130 trees. His brother, Humberto Llorens Jr. ’50, also attended the School. Mr. Llorens is survived by his wife, Carmen, three children and seven grandchildren.

1957

John M. Keller
A two-year Blair student, Dr. Keller was an honor roll student, captain of the track team and a member of both the tennis and wrestling teams. He participated in the choir, glee club, dance band and press club. Winner of the Harding Memorial Music Prize, Dr. Keller also won prizes in Spanish and algebra II. He attended Princeton University and earned his PhD in biochemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He taught and conducted research in biochemistry and molecular biology at Rosalind Franklin University in Chicago and enjoyed traveling. Dr. Keller was predeceased by his wife.

1959

Robert B. Lewis
Mr. Lewis attended Blair for four years and was a member of the varsity football and baseball teams. Dubbed “Red” by his classmates, he earned his teaching degree from Jersey City State University and worked for over 30 years in education as a teacher at Toms River High School. In his free time, he enjoyed working in his barn and tending his gardens. Mr. Lewis is survived by his wife of 50 years, Patricia, three children and 10 grandchildren.

1962

Peter D. Morris
Mr. Morris spent one year at Blair during which he played soccer and discovered a love of mechanical drawing. He attended Syracuse University and earned two bachelor’s degrees in English and architecture. A registered architect in 10 states, he opened a studio in Vermont, where he resided for many years and met his wife, Pennie. His interests included food and wine, gardening, boating and beekeeping. He is survived by Pennie and two children.

1963

Frank A. Arietta
A devoted alumnus, Mr. Arietta, affectionately called “Frankie” by his classmates, helped rally his class for its 50th reunion and enjoyed staying in touch with his Blair friends throughout his life. A varsity wrestler and baseball player, “Da Boss” went on to attend Wagner College and devoted his career to manufacturing, retiring as director of manufacturing from American Razor in Verona, Virginia. Grateful for his Blair education and his class’s leadership and
generosity in establishing the Class of ’63 Faculty Chair, he is survived by a son and two grandchildren.

Peter H. Sandfort Jr.
A three-year Blair student, Mr. Sandfort served as treasurer of the student council and was a member of both the swimming and cross country teams. A Latin scholar, he was also a member of the choir and the outing club. He earned his BS in dairy and food science from Iowa State University and became an expert in the dairy and food technology industries, traveling across the world to more than 38 countries. Described by his family as humorous, intelligent and at times irreverent, Mr. Sandfort is survived by his first wife, Sandra, two siblings, including Blair graduate John M. Sandfort ’67, three children, including Melissa E. Sandfort ’89, and two grandchildren.

1964
Lawrence S. Craven
Mr. Craven ran cross country and track and was a member of the chess club, The Breeze and the JV baseball team. He attended St. Peter’s College and spent his career working in employee benefits at Kiwasha-Lipton, Becton-Dickinson and MetLife. In retirement, he became an EMT and enjoyed serving others in need. Passionate about genealogy research, Mr. Craven served as treasurer of the Genealogical Society of Bergen County. He was also an active member of St. Anthony’s Church. A dedicated family man, Mr. Craven is survived by his wife of 42 years, Mary Beth, two children and four grandchildren.

1965
David M. Dockham II
Mr. Dockham played JV football and was a member of the varsity swim team during his three years at Blair. A strong student of physics, he attended Syracuse University and devoted his life to a career in the military as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force. He enjoyed reading and traveling. Preceded in death by his wife, Janet, he is survived by two children.

1982
Christopher S. Crowley
Mr. Crowley was a swimmer, a prefect and a water polo enthusiast during his two years at Blair. He graduated from the University of the Pacific and went on to a career in fashion, holding various senior management positions with J. Crew, The Limited and Thomas Pink. As one of three principals at Tailorbyrd, LLC, he was founder and creative director of Maker & Company. Along with his parents, Mr. Crowley is survived by his wife, Jennifer, and two children.

Former Faculty (1961-1966)
Donn D. Wright
A graduate of The Lawrenceville School and Trinity College, Mr. Dunn joined Blair’s faculty as director of development, a post he held for five years before leaving to become headmaster of the Hoosac School in Hoosick, New York. In between his two tenures as head of Hoosac, he served as headmaster of the Millbrook School, where he oversaw the introduction of co-education. Described as a tenacious fundraiser, he worked as a consultant for many non-profit organizations and independent schools, including Bridgton Academy and the Maine Maritime Museum. An avid writer, sailor and painter, he authored a book entitled Cooper Morgan, Headmaster, which describes the unique journey of a young man’s career as headmaster of a prestigious boarding school. Mr. Wright is survived by his wife of 62 years, Barbara, three children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Corrections
In the last issue, we incorrectly noted that Albert J. Dealaman ’45 was predeceased by his wife, Lila Sue. She is still living and we sincerely apologize for the error.

1974
Samuel M. Kinney III
Mr. Kinney attended Blair for four years and remained a loyal alumnus throughout his life. He earned his bachelor’s degree in English from the College of Wooster and enjoyed a successful career in the insurance industry as a senior executive at the global insurance firm Willis. He advised Blair on insurance matters and supported the School as a member of the 1848 Society Committee. An avid sailor and golfer, Mr. Kinney was devoted to serving his family, community and church. He was a dedicated member of the Calvary Episcopal Church, a board member of the Episcopal Diocese, member and past president of the Police Athletic League of Summit, New Jersey, a youth group mentor and youth soccer coach. He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Beth, and two children.

1995
John W. Marcial
The son of Blair alumnus and longtime faculty member Fernando Marcial ’39. John grew up on Blair’s campus and played varsity soccer, basketball and baseball. He was also a member of the camera club and The Blair Academy Players. A graduate of Columbia University, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps and worked at the Surf Club in Miami Beach, Florida, with his wife, Phyllis. Known for his quick wit and charismatic personality, Mr. Marcial was a gifted storyteller and beloved family man. He is survived by Phyllis, his brother, Fernando Marcial Jr. ’62, his nephew, Fernando Marcial III ’92 and his niece, Stephanie J. Marcial ’95.

Jonathan A. West
After spending one year at Blair, Mr. West attended Hartwick College. A talented painter, he founded his own business: Renaissance Painting & Decorating. Mr. West resided in Clinton, Connecticut, for more than 25 years and enjoyed gardening and fly fishing. He is survived by his daughter, Rebecca.
In recent months, Blair hosted five exciting off-campus events that gave alumni the opportunity to reconnect with classmates, faculty and their alma mater: Receptions took place in December at The Metropolitan Club of Washington, D.C., and at ArtsQuest’s SteelStacks Entertainment Center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; alumni and parents residing in the New Orleans area enjoyed a small dinner in January; professional networking was a top priority at a February young alumni gathering hosted by Emeritus Trustee Jim Krugman ’65 and his wife, Connie, in New York City; and alumni had the opportunity to meet Blair’s scholar-in-residence Timothy Patrick McCarthy, PhD, in Boston in late February.

“We know it’s not always possible for alumni, parents and friends of the School to make the trip to Blairstown,” said Director of Advancement Cara Mohlmann. “By holding receptions in cities across the U.S., members of the extended Blair family have been able to meet and network with one another and learn about all that is happening at our great School.”

In the months ahead, Blair will continue to bring alumni together in locations across the country.

“We are looking forward to meeting alumni, parents and friends of the School at our upcoming regional events, with the goal of fostering conversations and friendships that will bring us all closer together and strengthen the Blair community,” Mrs. Mohlmann said.

To see photos from each reception, please visit our website.

www.blair.edu/2014-2015-alumni-receptions
Blair Academy Alumni Weekend

Save the Date!

June 5-7, 2015

Weekend Highlights:

- Blair Cup Golf Scramble
- “Youth, Activism & Issues: Then & Now,” panel discussion moderated by Bob Weiner ’65
- Hard Hat Tours of the New Dormitories, led by Jim Frick
- 50th Reunion & Old Guard Cocktails
- Friday Night Class Gatherings
- Saturday Breakfast at Sharpe House for 50th Reunion & Old Guard
- 5K Run, led by Martin Miller & Latta Browse
- “Society of Skeptics: 1977-2015” with Elliott Trommald & Martin Miller
- Head of School Assembly & Awards Presentation

- Picnic Lunch, Children’s Activities & Live Entertainment
- “Tell Your Blair Story,” The Blair Leadership Stories Project Workshop, led by Carolyn Conforti-Browse ’79
- Alumni Lacrosse Game, led by Blake Haase ’97
- Alumni Art Show & Reception
- 1848 Society & John C. Sharpe Society Members-Only Reception
- Head of School Cocktail Reception
- Dinner & Dancing to The Good Times Band
- “Verdant Hills” Road Cycling Tour, led by Rob Merrifield & Carl Cramer ’72

Visit www.blair.edu/alumni-weekend to register, see who’s coming, and view updated events and programs.

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