



VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

*Celebrating Today &
Planning for Tomorrow*

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OUR TIME IS NOW!

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A CULTURE OF GIVING

As a community that is thriving, but still growing, it is important that we all embrace a culture of giving. Our future depends on all of us. p. 07

THE SECRET SAUCE OF FRIENDS

by Courtney Grew & Devin Arriaza

VBFS parents are our biggest advocates and our biggest cheerleaders. And they know first-hand why Friends is so special. Take a peek into two of our parents' experiences.

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VBFS QUICK FACTS

Target Enrollment for VBFS: 200+

Current Enrollment: 104

Early School: 37

Lower School: 25

Middle School: 22

Upper School: 20

Enrollment Forecast as of Jan 1: 110 (115 by March)

Enrollment Forecast as of Sept 1: 174

\$ Raised to Date: \$225,000

Annual Fund Participation Rate: 51%

\$ Raised for Professional Development: \$25,000

of Faculty & Staff: 31

of School Committee Members: 7

OUR TIME IS NOW!

by Mike Barclay, Head of School

Happy Holidays VBFS Community!

I hope this message finds you well. If you are like me, you may find yourself scratching your head wondering where the last decade went. The older you get the more you question the disappearance of time. When I look back on the last 48 years of life, as a child and student, I was always about wishing time away. Now, as an adult, particularly as my children have hit their teenage years, I find myself wanting to slow time down. I keep saying, "Stop growing up!" I actually want to freeze time. Knowing this is an impossibility, I recognize you can only grow and change with time. And, it's the future and transition of time that holds the great unknown, along with limitless possibilities. So, no freezing here!

What does time mean for Friends School? What does it mean for your child? What does it mean for you as a parent now or then? What does it mean for you as an alumnus then, now, and in the future? Virginia Beach Friends School, like many small independent schools, has been weathering a storm of change over the last five-plus years. Enrollment challenges, more competition, smaller family sizes leading to fewer students to recruit are elements of the shared independent school "storm." And, if you are like me, I love watching storms and the lightning light up the sky, it makes me feel good (Eddie Rabbit reference right there for 80's country music lovers). What makes me even feel better are the clear skies after bad weather passes. This is where Friends School is today!

My main message to you is that our school is growing, and growing for all the right reasons. Our enrollment continues to increase because of our perseverance in our mission as a Friends School. It is growing because our program has new standards in place, both academically and experientially. It is growing because of our amazing School Committee, teachers, and staff. It is growing because all children who walk on to our campus are accepted, loved, and encouraged to let their individual light shine. And, it's growing because each one of you believes in us. And, I/we don't take that lightly. Whether you are a parent, a faculty member, a Meeting member, a partner, an investor, or a donor, Kristin and I are indebted to you.

Throughout the following pages, you will read stories about future partnerships with programs like Virginia Beach Sports Academy and North End Juice. You will read about the adventures of our students, teachers, and administrators. You will read about enrollment goals now and for the future. You will read about the incredible sense of giving that has happened over the last year and a half. You will read and come to understand that Virginia Beach Friends School's time has come!

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all of you.



A VIEW INTO OUR FUTURE

by Mike Barclay, Head of School

Ah, the future. If only we had a crystal ball. But what fun would that be? Friends' future is dependent on many things: adherence to our mission, strong strategic vision, and a first-class program are key components. But there is also the notion of fate. Anyone who knows me is well aware that I am a firm believer in it. My favorite expression being, "Everything happens for a reason."

This past April, the School Committee, after careful consideration and analysis, made the strategic decision to retire our Upper School 9th through 12th-grade program due to low enrollment. The 2019-20 academic program was to be the final year of the full Upper School (the class of 2021 was to be our last graduating class the following year). The long-term vision was to focus our attention on growing our enrollment in our early, lower and middle school divisions in order to feed a thriving Upper School in the future. This was a very hard decision for the School Committee and the effects impacted a large portion of our community.

But fate has intervened. This past summer, when nearly no one was on the Friends campus, and I was getting ready to leave for the weekend, Walter Mfuko, Director of Virginia Beach Sports Academy (VBSA), was walking down the breezeway looking to speak with someone about renting the Wilson Center basketball court for his new sports academy. As I have mentioned previously, *VBSA is a program created and designed for high school and post-graduate age athletes. It's modeled after New England boarding schools' "prep" athletic programs with the aim of creating a top athletic program that spotlights its athletes through competition at the highest level, drawing the attention of college-level coaches and recruiters.* As Walter and I spoke, I asked, "What's the academic plan for your high school students?" Ultimately, he and his staff were still discussing this. I shared the recent decision about the Upper School retirement. Finally, after months of discussion, Virginia Beach Friends School and Virginia Beach Sports Academy have engaged in a two-year, VBFS/VBSA pilot program that has Friends School being the sole academic arm for VBSA. The pilot program is going well because the organizations share a common understanding and commitment to our standards of excellence in Knowledge, Character, and Community. Next year, VBSA is targeted to have 50 students of this caliber apply for admission to our Upper School. It seems as fate has willed that our Upper School may be coming out of retirement much sooner than anticipated because of this strategic partnership. I have been and remain cautiously optimistic that this will afford us the ability to offer admission to all current Upper School aged Friends students, as well as open it to others in our community.

In closing, on behalf of myself and the School Committee, I'd like to invite you to a *State of the School meeting on Wednesday, January 29th, from 6-7pm in the Meeting House* (the small standalone building on the left as you enter campus). We will be discussing the overall progress of the school and shedding more light on our future (including the Upper School).



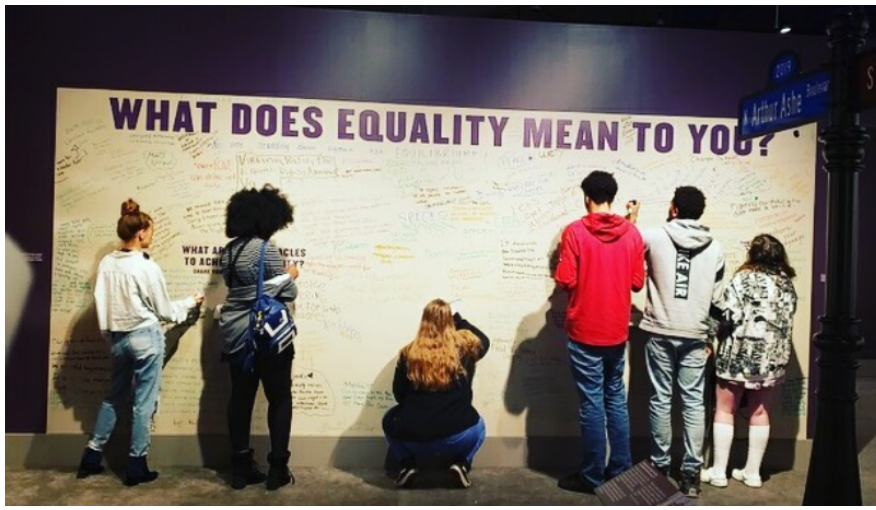
Faculty & Staff at the beginning of school team function



Spanish trip to Norfolk for salsa dancing and lunch



VBSA Basketball Team and Coaches



Upper School students visiting the Virginia Museum of History and Culture

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACTION

by Galen Hamann, Assistant Head of School

Friends School has had a long history of being a school that believes in the experiential education method of teaching and learning. By engaging in projects like the oyster restoration project students had hands-on experiences with local organizations to learn about the bay, oysters, and what has changed over time due to over-fishing the oysters. They grew the oysters from spat, and then measured them each month at a community member's dock, until they were big enough to be placed independently back into the bay. Each student experienced how they could be stewards of our bay and the aqua-life therein for years to come by this simple act of growing and planting new oysters, and they learned about the life-cycle of an oyster and the habitat that is the bay in the process. This method of learning in which the student is involved and learns through an experience that is not at their desk but out in the world interacting with the topic or material is one that Friends has used since its inception. Here are just a few examples from school this fall.

In planning the high school trip to New York City we wanted to ensure there were curricular connections, and as a result the summer reading was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. During the first few weeks of school, students discussed the themes from the book- race, community, family dynamics, as well as the characters and plot of the novel. During their trip to NYC they had the opportunity to see the play in the theater and their culminating project was an essay to compare and contrast the elements of the book and the play.

In Marine Biology, the students have had a chance to get their hands wet since the very first week of school when they resurrected an old fish tank from storage, cleaned it out and got it placed and running as a Chesapeake Bay habitat tank in the science classroom. They trolled for specimen that they could examine both under the microscope (phytoplankton, zooplankton, periwinkle egg cases) and in the tank including red beard sponge that has grown and spread over the course of several months. In addition to daily observation of the interaction between the blue crabs, sea squirts, mullets, live barnacles, grass shrimp and others, water chemistry is measured on a weekly basis.

In Spanish the students learned about the Latin tradition of a Quinceañera- a rite of passage for 15 year old girls. They then learned about the elements of the celebration first hand by each designing their own Quinceañera celebration, incorporating cost, theme, food selection, decorations, and music choice. They prepared a presentation of these for judging by a committee of judges (continued on page 5).



Faith in Play with Galen



Dairy farming lesson with Elsie Mae the cow



Upper School in New York City



Senior fall college tour

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACTION

CONTINUED

In middle school, students began their study of English with the theme of Immigrants and Immigration. In addition to reading novels and non-fiction articles that centered around immigrant life, they also researched their own family to learn about their own immigration stories. Students interviewed family members, created family trees, and wrote research papers based on the immigrant experiences of their families. Students shared these projects with the community on Grandparents' Day. Additionally, they presented a musical titled, "We Come From Everywhere" about the history of immigration in the United States. 7/8 grade will continue their study of US immigration when they visit NYC and Ellis Island in the spring.

In 7th and 8th grade history, the students have been studying the Civil War. As part of their learning, they were asked, "Should Confederate statues remain on public display or should they be removed? And if they should be removed, where should they go?" To help answer these questions, the class recently traveled to Richmond to see first-hand some famous Confederate statues and memorials. Students also visited the American Civil War Museum and historic Hollywood Cemetery. As students walked along the historic Monument Avenue, they discussed the two sides of the Confederate statue debate. Students are currently using these experiences to help them construct persuasive essays which they will share with the Friends community.

In the 5th/6th grade Garden and Social Entrepreneurship they learned first-hand how to design, and implement a fundraising project when they organized and ran a haunted house for the lower school.

Kindergarteners have been learning about bats this fall. They began their study by developing over 30 questions they sought to answer through research. One question was how big is the wingspan of the bat- they then came around the school measuring adult wing spans to see which was bigger. During their study they found out that bats play a significant role in our ecosystem and that many species are endangered. They brainstormed ways to help the bats and asked to build a bat house which they will build in January. They are currently working to find a place that is suitable for a bat house.

In 1st and 2nd grade they learned about the elements of a map in their social studies class and then designed their own map in art class. 3rd and 4th graders were studying fairy tales at the beginning of the year- comparing and contrasting old and new versions of the same tale. Then each student wrote their own version of one of these classic tales.

I have picked just a few to highlight from the fall and there are many more- some of which you see in the pictures and others I hope you will hear about from our teachers and students!



Independent reading in Teacher Courtney's library



Outdoor drawing with Teacher James



Middle School at Camp Silverbeach



Channing Miller, Owner of North End Juice Company, and Teacher Rachel



New garden beds

NORTH END JUICE



It all started with one juicer and a blender. Channing had traveled the world surfing and exploring different cultures, and when he returned home to Virginia he wanted to share his favorite global flavors with his community.

He also wanted to help people eat better without having to overthink or overspend. He started as a sidewalk juice walk-up window serving fresh-pressed juices in the museum district of Richmond. Since then they have grown into three locations in Richmond, Midlothian and Virginia Beach, and offer a wide variety of menu items in addition to juices. Everything they create is made fresh in house using the best ingredients (including those grown at Friends!).

Visit North End Juice across the street at Hilltop and introduce yourselves to Channing!

THE FRIENDS FARM

by Mike Barclay and Teacher Rachel

One of the most exciting new additions to the Friends Campus this year is the Friends Farm. The Friends Farm is a thoughtfully curated and sustainable agricultural learning facility. Our mission is to build a more health conscious community through specialized curriculum for both students and parents.

We will focus on sustainable year round farming, nutrient cycling , germination and growth from seed to sale utilizing science, math, geography and seasonal climate.

The partnership strengthens and develops community relationships based on reciprocity and shared commitment to the mission. The curriculum facilitates exploratory learning through direct connection with plants, produce and nature.

Channing Miller, the founder of North End Juice, in addition to Teacher Rachel, is helping the school to create our Farm. He has been incredibly generous with his time, resources, and knowledge and a ton of credit goes to him for our new beds and watering system.

All of our students will continue to benefit from having the Farm here on campus. Just think the growing season is right around the corner!



Garden cultivation with Teacher Kate



A CULTURE OF GIVING

by Kristin Barclay, Director of Development

As many of you read in my letter during Friendsgiving and Mike's recent note, the act of giving is so important for independent schools.

As with every independent school, Virginia Beach Friends School does not receive support from local, state and federal agencies and instead relies on the generosity of the community to sustain the school financially. The Annual Fund is the lifeline of the school and the most important of all the school's fundraising initiatives. For the 2019-20 academic year, while we are re-growing enrollment for the school, tuition revenue and fees only cover 50% of VBFS operating costs; the remaining is covered by generous donors. This percentage will continue to decline as our enrollment increases, another important reason VBFS has a target enrollment number to keep us running at a break-even (the goal of every non-profit institution).

As a Quaker school, it is important we instill the value of giving for the greater good. With asking for 100% participation to the Annual Fund from everyone in our community, we are ensuring that everyone has a part in supporting and sustaining our School.

What does the Annual Fund support?

1. Academic Programming
2. Experiential Education
3. Campus Enhancement
4. Student Assistance (Scholarships and Financial Aid)

Why is 100% participation important?

Participation sends a strong message of support for the school and our students as well as our governing bodies (Virginia Association of Independent Schools and the National Association of Independent Schools). In addition, many grants that the school applies for requires a proof of 100% participation among their community.

In addition to the Annual Fund, the school collectively raises money for certain budget line items, for example Professional Development for our teachers and our new kitchen. This is separate to the Annual Fund and gives our community specific initiatives to fundraise for and see immediate impact.

Lastly, I would like to cordially ask you to "Save the Date" for our Founders & Alumni Day, February 22nd. This is our biggest event of the year bringing our community together in celebration of our school. Invitation to follow.





A RETURNING PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Courtney Grew, VBFS Librarian & Mom to Jack, Judah, and Benny

We have been a part of VB Friends School since 2015, when my oldest son was 3 and had never been away from his mom before. I was so worried and had such a deep fear of leaving him for the first time.

My fears were quickly taken away by witnessing the love and attention that he received at school. The whole atmosphere of Friends is more of a community and family than a school where you just drop your child off and pick them up.

Now in 2019, all three of my sons attend VB Friends. They are all in the same building and two of them are in the same classroom. Every single teacher, even ones that do not teach my sons, know them by name. When we walk into school, there is a feeling of reuniting with our Friends.

My children daily are learning about love, compassion, citizenship, community and integrity. This school is a wholesome place that develops the entire child, based on who your child is as a human being.

The day that we walked into Friends School was a day that changed our lives for the better, and we will remain lifetime Friends School Waves!

NEW TO FRIENDS

by Devin Arriaza, VBFS Spanish Teacher & Mom to Areli and Elias

I have two children in the lower school. One in Kindergarten, and one in third grade. We came to Friends School from a year in public school, and before that my daughter attended another private school for three years.

Friends School has been such an amazing place for both myself and my children. All of our teachers are caring, not only in regards to academics and fostering a love of learning, but in building character, and shining a light on their personal gifts and interests.

Our family is constantly impressed with the community participation and support. Our kids are in safe hands with the Friends School, and I am proud to share how much of a positive impact the school has made on my children's self esteem and overall learning.

