



VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

*Celebrating Today &
Planning for Tomorrow*

Inside the Issue
FEBRUARY 2021
Vol 2 Issue 1



FAREWELL TO FIVE FRIENDS!

Hear more about the last senior class at Friends School! We will watch with proud eyes as you change the world! p. 03



MEET & GREET: THE YOUNGS

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ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Learn more about the growing community interest in VBFS! We are excited to welcome new families to campus! p.06

VBFS QUICK FACTS

Target Enrollment for VBFS: 200+

Current Enrollment: 146

Early School: 42

Lower School: 75

Middle School: 24

Upper School: 5

Enrollment Forecast for Sept 1, 2021: 160+

\$ Raised to Date for Annual Fund: \$94,586

\$ Raised for Experiential Learning: \$25,000

of Faculty & Staff: 32

of School Committee Members: 7



A TALE OF TWO QUOTES!

by Mike Barclay, Head of School

Dear Virginia Beach Friends School Community,

Great quotations inspire and say more with less. Friends School, like a great quote, is an understated gem of a school that says more with less. Our values-based academic program, anchored in the Quaker testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship, is the reason families are flocking to our program. The Friends testimonies, our school's foundation, speak to who we are as a community. VBFS has heart! It has endless depth. Because of this, we've found and continue to find success.

William Penn, the legendary Quaker, once said, "Patience and diligence, like faith, remove mountains." Words that describe our school's collective experience and journey over the last two years. Upon arriving at Friends School in June of 2018, I found a community eager to move forward. Through the hard work, patience, and diligence of many, the school has scaled one mountain after another, unafraid to confront obstacles. These obstacles ranged from dwindling enrollment (well below 100), to a lack of modernization in technology, to our most recent unprecedented obstacle, COVID-19.



Now, two and half years later, VBFS has 146 students with 160 students predicted for the next academic year. Our campus has been wired with fiber optic cable providing state of the art connectivity, and we continue to conquer COVID-19 by offering exceptional in-person education while other schools in our surrounding area remain virtual. Virginia Beach Friends School has transformed itself in a very short period of time. While always a wonderful, well-loved independent school in Hampton Roads, Friends School was unknown to many families. Now, with over half of our school community new to the program, Friends School has become "buzzworthy." We are now an academic and cultural setting consistently suggested via social media feeds, a topic of parent conversations and recommendations, and a frequent target in Google searches. How do we know this? Prospective families tell us when they call the school and then tour, a daily experience for us.

This transformation has not happened overnight and it is far from over. Richard Branson, the billionaire entrepreneur and philanthropist, says, "Every success story is a tale of constant adaptation, revision, and change." Sir Richard's words might be aptly summarized in five short words, "Adapt or cease to exist." Living in the past, never thinking "outside the box" or adapting to changing circumstances ultimately renders an organization irrelevant. Remember Blockbuster Video or Kodak Photography. Both businesses are perfect examples of companies that failed to envision the future and ultimately became obsolete. Netflix consumed Blockbuster (and everyone in its path) through its video streaming, and Kodak missed the opportunity to move to digital photography, thinking people would never give up print photography.

In the last two years Friends School has been rapidly adapting, revising, and changing to meet market and global demands. Whether it be creating the most relevant academic program rooted in Quaker S.P.I.C.E.S. or meeting the needs of a global pandemic, Friends School has adapted and done so quickly. It is this malleability that has allowed our little school to thrive!

As we look to the coming academic year and the immediate years to come, we see our campus changing and shifting to meet growing enrollment needs and creating new 21st-century learning spaces that allow our students to be fully prepared for life after Friends. Our school continues to evolve, and this evolution is allowing us to thrive. William Penn and Sir Richard Branson's words speak to the heart of our unique school, one with a history we value and more importantly, a future that offers endless possibilities. Together, we have the potential to embrace the challenges that will result in a school and community that stand out as examples of all that is possible when we set worthy goals and work as a united community to achieve them.



VBFS graduating class of 2020

OUR SENIORS & TWO ROADS

by Mike Barclay, Head of School

Robert Frost in his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*, famously writes in his last three lines...

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

The 2020-21 academic year sees our final senior class of Friends School graduating. The Class of 2021, comprised of five brave young women, faced two roads at the end of their sophomore year and decided to take the road less taken. And, arguably, it has "made all the difference."

Our seniors have weathered a Friends School that has been in constant change during their four years of high school. Ultimately, at the end of their Sophomore year, based on the school's decision to phase out its 9th-12th grade program over a two year period, they had to decide whether to finish their high

school career at Friends or move to another academic program. The lesser person (myself included) would have moved onto a full high school program with more bells and whistles, students, sports programs, and social opportunities. However, our bold and brave seniors determined that S.P.I.C.E.S (the Friends testimonies) and their relationships with their teachers were more important, and stayed.

Now, our seniors are benefiting from their bravery. As the senior English teacher, I've had the privilege of watching our seniors grow from the first day of their senior year to now. In this group, we have a future digital media and marketing mogul (Haley Miller), a world-class pharmacist (Lara Leiden), brilliant sociologist and literary scholar (Sarah Underhill), famed crime scene investigator (Mallory Gerstein), and a future mega-watt music industry talent (London Boyd).

Each of these young women has brought her individual *Light* to VBFS this year, and in doing so, our program has never shone brighter. As we roll into their final four months of high school, we all collectively salute their bravery to take the road not taken as it has made all the difference for our school and community. Thank you, seniors!





Virginia Beach Friends Meeting House

simplicity
peace
integrity
community
equality
stewardship

Q&A WITH MEETING: THE YOUNGS

*by Chris Dotolo, School Committee Treasurer &
Andy and Pat Young, longtime Meeting Members*

Q: How long have you been members of Virginia Beach Friends Meeting?

A. I transferred my membership from Hamilton Friends Meeting in Upstate New York to the Meeting in 1988, after moving down here. Pat followed with her membership request soon after. I've been a Quaker since 1976. Pat was an attender until we got down here.

Q. What does being a Quaker and a member of the Meeting mean to you?

A. It is important for us to be part of a faith community. It nurtures our spiritual life. I like Quakerism because it encourages me, in the silence, to work on my own relationship with God through prayer and meditation. We came specifically to Virginia Beach because there was a Quaker School associated with the Meeting here.

Q. Tell us about the relationship between the Meeting and the Virginia Beach Friends School and what you think the role of Friends Meeting is in the success of the school.

A. The School is "under the care of the Meeting." This does not mean the Meeting "runs" the School. The care relationship reflects the Meeting's affection for its school. The school is no longer in its infancy, so the present relationship is more like a parent towards a grown child. We provide financial support as we can. We encourage its growth. We welcome all those closely associated with it!

Q. Why do you think Virginia Beach Friends School should be a consideration for any family choosing a school in Virginia Beach?

A. A Friends School education prepares each student to discover their gifts and face life's challenges as they navigate school. The Friends' Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship (S.P.I.C.E.S.) are embedded in the philosophy of the school. Any parent would want their children to learn these values! Friends' is unique among school choices in this area.



Pat & Andy Young, Virginia Beach Friends Meeting Members



Aerial view of Friends School future campus

THE FUTURE FRIENDS SCHOOL

by Anna Canada, Development Director

Over the last two and a half years, we have seen a rebirth of Friends School with our bright light finally shining through! New leadership, updated marketing, wise business decisions, dedicated staff, a supportive community, and our amazing new and old families have all had a lasting positive effect on our success. Onward and upward! Our enrollment has doubled, our vision is focused, and we are so thankful for the period of growth we are witnessing making all aspects of the school stronger.

First, we have spent much of the last six months working with HBA Architects to create a future layout for an updated campus. We hope to be able to soon present some preliminary renderings of our progress. As you know, with the sale of the back property, we will be losing a portion of our green space, back playground, and the Wilson Center in the summer of 2022. We have worked closely with the members of the Virginia Beach Friends Meeting who have generously agreed to allow the school to expand the current front playground into a much larger playground and green space for all Friends students. This playground expansion will begin this spring and last through the summer. During this move, the school will look to add additional play equipment to the natural setting between the Meeting House and the Lutheran Church for our children to explore. We are working with a professional landscaping company and will keep you all abreast of our project progress!

Second, with the loss of the Wilson Center starting summer of 2022, we have focused a huge effort on working with HBA and WPL Site Design to build a brand-new state-of-the-art addition to the current administration building. This is going to be a substantial 19,000 square foot facility that will house our gym, performing arts room, music rooms, art studio, modern science lab, additional classrooms, kitchen, offices, and more! We can't wait to share more on this exciting project as we move through the process of interior and exterior design.

The takeaway for the entire Friends School community is that VBFS is on the move and the future is BRIGHT! Despite the challenges we have faced, the best is yet to come for Virginia Beach Friends School with exciting times on the horizon for our amazing school. We have aggressive timelines to finish our campus master plan, and we are confident that we will be able to continue to provide the best education and best experience to all of our students. Thank you for trusting in our planning and being part of the future at Friends School!



Hanging out at Virginia Beach Friends School



Kompan double swing combination



Recess at Virginia Beach Friends School



Virginia Beach Friends School Fall Fun Run

FRIENDS SCHOOL ADMISSION BOOM

by Candice Jarden, Asst. Head of School & CFO

To say that the 2020-2021 admission season was booming is an understatement! Virginia Beach Friends School experienced a 25% enrollment increase, which reflects national trends in private schools across the country. The boom in enrollment is directly related to our private school providing in-person learning. This has been VBFS administration's goal since June when the school opened our First Adventures Summer Camp.

The admission season typically begins in January and ends in May. This year, because of the Coronavirus, admission has been on-going. This summer VBFS had more than 200 inquiries, 150 tours and 125 applications! We started a waitlist for many classes in June, with families anxiously awaiting a phone call stating there was a spot available for their child.

From inquiries, to tour to application growth, we had to make many difficult decisions, including how to best meet enrollment increases and when to put a cap on additional enrollment. In the interest of safety and maintaining small class sizes, the school opened one additional 1st/2nd grade classroom and created waitlists for the remainder. First and second grades are pivotal years in a student's educational journey, and we felt that adding another classroom for in-person learning would assist in the growth of that age group.

As the likelihood of other schools returning to in-person learning wanes, many families continue to inquire about enrolling their children at VBFS for the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond. The National Association of Independent Schools reports that private schools around the country are seeing 45% more applications, with half of those applications for children from kindergarten through second grade. VBFS is experiencing the same trend for those grade levels as well. This is an exciting time at VBFS! On the horizon are a number of innovative programs, including the first-ever standalone Early Kindergarten program that will allow students who miss the kindergarten cutoff date to have an introduction to the Kindergarten program throughout the entire academic year. Additional new programs for all four Early Childhood groups next year include full science, STEAM, cooking, and yoga classes.

Anticipating full enrollment by May 2021, and the new building and playground beginning construction later this year, the administration team and faculty will be focusing on increased outdoor learning. Next year we are incorporating a playground for 1st through 8th graders that will bring exciting new playground equipment, along with a future building to hold a performing arts theater, state-of-the-art music, art, and science labs.

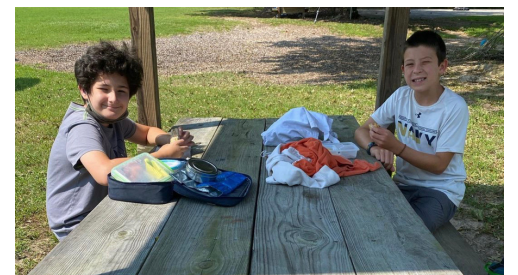
Moving forward, the school is prepared for increased enrollment for 2021-2022, and we are currently working on determining the optimum school enrollment size. We are excited to have all the new and returning families on campus! We will continue to enroll students from across Hampton Roads so they can experience a supportive school environment that fosters daily practices of learning through reflection, service, and caring for our world and school. We are a school like no other, nurturing individuality and personal gifts, all while letting each child's Light shine!



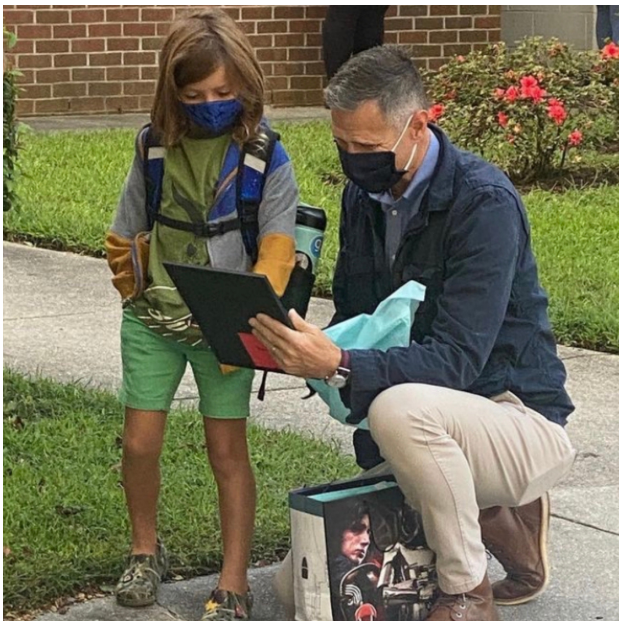
Enrollment marketing for 2020-2021



In-person learning fall 2020



Students utilizing outdoor space for lunch



Head of School, Mike Barclay, admiring student artwork

COVID MONTH 11

by Mike Barclay, Head of School

In mid-March of 2020, I clearly remember walking to the Friends School parking lot the day the Governor announced all schools would be moving to an "at the time" two-week Distance Learning Platform. During pick-up, parents were discussing and guessing how long the quarantine would last based on what the world then knew about COVID-19. Now, eleven months into the global pandemic, independent schools continue to be beacons of success for conducting and providing high-quality forms of education from online to hybrid to fully in-person academic experiences.

At Friends School, led by the incredible work of Candice Jarden, Asst. Head of School and CFO, as our COVID point person, we have been navigating the pandemic waters with bated breath. From the start of the pandemic with VBFS's rapid response to establishing an exceptional online curriculum to re-opening in June of 2020, as soon as the Commonwealth allowed for safe in-person instruction, Friends School has been able to meet the social-emotional needs of our students through the wonderful work of brave faculty fostering in-person education.

While COVID has swirled around us touching various families in different ways, fortunately, due to the terrific work and the partnership between our families and the school, only three confirmed positive cases have found our classrooms. And, in these cases, the quick actions of parents and the school following COVID protocols helped reduce spread. Way to go, everyone!

While the collective world and our community are far from being out of the COVID woods, a light is appearing at the end of the tunnel. Just recently, our faculty starting registering for the COVID vaccine. With this important step, our teachers and community are one step closer to, hopefully, returning to life as we once knew it. Keep up the great work VBFS!

SPIRIT RISING

by Courtney Grew, Librarian & PTO

Virginia Beach Friends School has had a long standing relationship with an organization called Spirit Rising. Spirit Rising is a non-profit organization that works to provide necessities and a food pantry for Virginia Native Americans.

VBFS takes on three major projects with Spirit Rising each school year. The first of these is our Thanksgiving program. During this time we rally together to provide meals for the members of the Mattaponi Reservation. This past fall, we were able to provide 35-40 bags or boxes filled to the brim with food and we also collected \$860 to provide turkeys and other perishable items to the community of Mattaponi. Our second project is the Christmas program, where we fulfill in totality the Christmas lists of 6-7 children. Finally, our last project is our Easter program. We prepare, and deliver roughly 50 Easter baskets for the children at the Mattaponi.

The Native Americans in our area have been through very trying times and partnering with this organization has been extremely fulfilling as an outreach opportunity for our entire community and an outlet for living by the Quaker testimonies. VBFS hopes to continue working with the wonderful people of Spirit Rising for many years to come.



Mattaponi Tribe artwork



VBFS Early School students, late summer 2020

VBFS CAMP: FIRST ADVENTURERS

by Jason Weast, Athletic & Special Programs Director

Virginia Beach Friends School is excited to announce that the finishing touches are being done on the summer camp program for the 2021 season! For the first time ever, Friends School will be offering a 10-week summer camp program from ages 2.5 years old through 12 years old. VBFS Summer Camp will begin on June 6th and finish up on August 13th. The camp day will go from 8 am until 3 pm in the afternoon. We will be offering an extended care option to parents from 3 pm to 5 pm for students aged 2.5 - 8 years old.

Our current plan is to have 4 sections of students with different age groups for each section. Tiesha Ridely will have Cottage-aged students, Tanya Hall will have Early Childhood - aged students, and Sarah Davidson will have students from K - 2nd grade(s). These 3 sections will be following a thematic weekly schedule. These themes are the same as last summer but will include special guest appearances from VBFS specials teachers such as James O'Connor, Sarah Combs, Kate Keiser, Thomas Joseph, and Jason Weast.

Our fourth section of summer camp students will include students aged 9 years old to 12 years old. This 10-week section of summer camp will have similar themes to the other 3 sections but will follow a different schedule. Instead of having the same homeroom teacher, each week will have a different teacher depending on the subject or theme being taught. After taking feedback from parent and student experiences last summer, we have tried to offer multiple sections of the same summer camp. The summer camps with two sections of the same camp include:

Building-up Art Camp with James O'Connor, STEAM Camp with Kate Keiser, Culinary Creations Camp with Dafna Sonnenthal, and Yoga/Mindfulness with Barabara Schlegel. Additionally, we will be offering a Steel Pans Camp with Thomas Joseph and a Lego Challenge Camp with Danny Grondin & Barabara Murphy.

We hope that you will consider "spending your summer with Friends!" Please look for our registration to go live no later than March 1. If you have any further questions about summer camp, please drop me a line! jason@vbfschool.org

VBFS 411: PARENT PERSPECTIVE

by Charlene Hudson, longtime VBFS parent

I am a southern California native, and when I first moved to Virginia Beach and enrolled my children in Friends School, almost seven years ago, I was so impressed by the sense of community I felt right away. I saw immediately that people in the Friends community took care of each other. I have four children who have been enrolled in Friends School from preschool through high school.

My children and I have experienced the "old head of school", the "interim head of school" and now the "new head of school." This gives me a unique perspective and ability to say that I am impressed with Michael Barclay (aka Teacher Mike) and his leadership at the Friends School. He knows every child on our campus; their name, their families, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

He has had a very positive influence on all of my children, but most especially, my oldest son David (now a 10th grader). Mike had a keen understanding that my son is shy but very responsible and needed to be seen for all his amazing gifts. This was most apparent on one of the school trips to New York City. First, Mike had the class create a budget and select all the restaurant and hotel locations. Each student was responsible for teaching a lesson on one of the sites that the class visited in the city. This made my son feel empowered. Mike continued to empower David when one of his classmates had a bloody nose and Mike needed to get him back to the hotel right away. He tasked David (who had already proven himself a great navigator in the city) with getting the group back to the hotel as quickly as possible. David triumphed and Mike was able to commend him on his efforts and abilities.

David has become a strong leader amongst his peers and has transformed into a young man who holds his head high. I know that Mike was instrumental in David's personal growth and for that I am grateful.



THE GIFT THAT GIVES BACK: TIME

by Anna Canada, Director of Development

It's hard to imagine a more powerful dream team than Friends School and our parents working together for the good of our community. Studies show that parent involvement at their child's school improves relationships, student performance, as well as overall school standards. It's a win, win, win!

Plain and simple, volunteering helps with getting to know Friends School. Getting connected on a more personal level with the school provides insight on school leaders, why our independent school operates the way it does, how our Quaker education and mission are carried out, and presents opportunities to build meaningful relationships with other families. Personally, I've found that my satisfaction with a school increases as my friendships with other parents grow and my involvement and understanding of the school deepens. When strengthening connections with my child's schoolmates and their parents, my professional and personal network grows as well; what I give to the school, I get in return.

Taking an interest in and committing to being more involved in your child's daily life and education is a huge benefit to the parent/child relationship as well as the child's academic career.

"Volunteering in your children's school shows that you're interested in their education- that you consider their school a cause worth your time and energy," says Ingrid Healy, former director of advancement at Parish Episcopal School in Dallas. Serving as a parent volunteer is vital to enriching your child's young mind and shapes their perception of the school environment and the importance of academic work. *SchoolFamily.com finds that students with "highly engaged parents" with regards to school are 30 percent more successful based on happiness, attendance, and assessment.*

There are many ways to give the gift of time:

- 1. Shape your volunteering to fit your time constraints:** There is no need to overextend your commitments. It is 100% understandable that you have limits and priorities. Volunteering to be a room parent or to chaperone a field trip may work if you have a busy schedule. If you have more time flexibility, consider volunteering with the PTO or on a school committee.
- 2. Consider volunteering to help with fundraising:** This can range from volunteering to help plan a fundraising event such as our upcoming Founder's Day to being on the school's development committee to help solicit for our Annual Fund.
- 3. Volunteer your expertise:** Friends School appreciates volunteers with expertise in real estate, law, insurance, construction, and any other business. This kind of volunteering is especially suitable for working parents.

The benefits of parent volunteers for Virginia Beach Friends School are obvious. The phrase, *"It takes a village,"* rings especially true in the case of Friends School, as with small independent schools alike. We would love to get to know you better and if you have the opportunity to lend a helping hand in the future, we would certainly appreciate it!