

2026 / ISSUE 2

The Westonian *Magazine*



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The Greenwood

On the Cover:

This photo of the Greenwood was taken after the renovation of the stairs. See more about the history of the Greenwood and the stair restoration on page 30.

Left: A drone shot of the Greenwood.

Correction: In the last issue of *The Westonian*, Dietz was misspelled in the article about the Shoemaker Visiting Lecturer Series. We regret the error and share our sincere apologies with the Dietz family.

We welcome letters to the editor. You may send them to our home address or to westonian@westtown.edu.

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The Westonian, a magazine for alums, parents, and friends, is published by Westtown School. Its mission is to capture the life of the school, to celebrate the impact that our students, faculty, and alums have on our world, and to serve as a forum for connection, exploration, and conversation. We publish two issues a year.



“At Westtown, through the transformative power of this education, we are in fact trying to change the world, one incredible young person at a time.”

Changing the World

Late one afternoon fifteen years ago—during one of the stretches of my career when I worked at a school that wasn’t Westtown—I found myself in a meeting in which a colleague commented, as if stating the obvious, “Well, it’s not like we’re trying to change the world!” I remember this moment as clearly as if it had happened over coffee this morning, and the disconnect it prompted in me stopped me in my tracks. Aren’t we, though? Isn’t that actually at the very heart of what the best educations do?

Among the many reasons I’m grateful that my career led me back to Westtown is the clarity of—and my deep personal alignment with—our mission: “Guided by the essential Quaker calling to seek out and honor that of God in each of us, Westtown School challenges its students to realize their individual gifts while learning and living together in a diverse community. Westtown inspires and prepares its graduates to be stewards and leaders of a better world.”

Of course, families join Westtown for what their children will learn, the skills they will develop, the experiences they will have, and how this will all inform who they grow to become as individuals. And we facilitate just that with joy, excellence, and devotion moment after moment, day after day, year after year. But the impact of who these wonderful children become, and how they move through the world for the rest of their lives, is never limited to the individual or to the boundaries of our life-changing campus. The Light within each of us—how it grows, finds a use in the world, is seen in ourselves and in others—ripples out through our alums and across the globe. With hope, grace, and determination, in countless interactions large and small, connections deep and fleeting, and relationships profound and passing, the influence of what we practice on these 600 acres shapes the world we share. And like our students and alums, Westtown School itself is both grounded in what we believe and committed to continuing our own process of becoming, just as we have done since our conception and founding two and a quarter centuries ago, still focused on serving the students and the world of today, as well as those of decades and centuries to come.

So, I’d tell my former colleague this: at Westtown, through the transformative power of this education, we are in fact trying to change the world, one incredible young person at a time. And in both the pages that follow and in the lives of the Westonians you know, I hope you glimpse ample evidence of that ongoing process.

Thank you, as always, for being a part of this. 

News from Around 'Town

One of the Earth Day
workshops: Upcycling
in the Library.



Earth Day Celebrations

While we prioritize caring for and honoring our planet every day here at Westtown, Earth Day gives us a special opportunity to celebrate that work. Here's a look at how each division honored Earth Day.

The Lower School was abuzz with a variety of special activities as they embraced Earth Day with curiosity and wonder. Pre-K students completed an Earth Day Activity Book and took part in an alphabet nature walk, exploring their surroundings and searching for items in nature. Kindergarten students reflected on their learning through illustrations and writing about ways to care for our planet. First graders learned songs and read books about the Earth, followed by thoughtful conversations about what they love in nature and how we can protect it. Second graders traveled throughout campus—from the Greenwood to the lake and the vernal pond—reading Earth Day stories and observing the signs of new growth all around them. They also explored the concept of perennial plants and the cycles of nature. Third graders walked to the lake for meditative drawing, using the peaceful setting as inspiration, and then gathered for a reflective Meeting for Worship. Fourth graders weeded beds near the Lower School playground in preparation for a bird habitat. They also took a writers' trek, spending time writing under the blooming cherry trees. Fifth graders engaged in thoughtful discussions about change movements and environmental justice, demonstrating a growing awareness of how they can make a difference in the world.

A special highlight of the week was Thursday's fire circle Meeting for Worship in the woods, where the entire Lower School gathered in reflection and



community, surrounded by the beauty of nature. During Meeting, students shared messages about the Earth and the importance of caring for it. Their messages echoed their learning throughout the week, reflecting a growing appreciation of nature and a shared understanding of stewardship.

In Middle School, the week began with Meeting for Worship. The Student Clerks shared three queries related to sustainability and charged the gathering to reflect on the role we play in caring for our planet. The first query connected sustainability to the testimony of integrity, which charges us to match our words to our actions. On Monday and Tuesday, Middle School students did

workshops with [Rebecca Kamen](#), our visiting artist for the year. Kamen, along with art teacher [Marta Willgoose Salo](#), facilitated workshops with all students that began with her talking about her creative process and her connection to nature. They then learned about the “Kernel of Truth” project, which Kamen is creating in collaboration with students in all three divisions. The project explores the genetics of corn, leading to a connection and curiosity centered around her work with soil and soil systems. The final project will be an installation featuring patterns representing corn genetics, soil systems derived from soil collected on campus, and soil leaf prints organized in the four directions.



Students gathered leaves from around the South Woods and used them to create prints. Those prints will be featured in the final installation, which will be installed in our Chu Gallery in the fall.

Middle Schoolers also welcomed representatives from the Clear Air Council, Philadelphia's oldest environmental non-profit. The Clear Air Council is an environmental health advocacy organization fighting for everyone's right to a healthy environment. Students learned about their work to fight air pollution and about the PurpleAir monitor recently installed at Westtown, which provides real-time air quality data in the area. The monitor, mounted on the Belfry, provides real-time air quality

data at the local level and at the regional, national, and global levels. It serves as a powerful educational tool for teachers and students to deepen their understanding of air quality, raise awareness, and engage in meaningful advocacy.

In Upper School, we were honored to welcome **Ms. Zulene Mayfield** of Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL) as our keynote speaker. She shared her experience advocating for the people of Chester, Pennsylvania, who have suffered the physical and emotional toll of environmental racism. She provided a powerful example to our students to use their voices to speak up about the injustices around them. After an

Earth-Day-themed lunch, students selected from 19 different workshops that included cleaning up East Chester Creek, upcycling, sewing with scrap fabrics, and learning about sustainability in our buildings from one of our Westtown carpenters. The Upper School also gathered for an Earth Day Meeting for Worship, where queries prompted students to consider the ways in which they can protect their present and future world. The day concluded with intentional, unscheduled time for students to be outdoors and enjoy our incredible campus. Some students chose to canoe at the lake while others played volleyball in front of the Athletic Center or went for a walk.

One Story Week

One Story Week is a time when our entire Lower School community comes together around a shared book. Every child is invited into the same story, the same conversation, and the same spirit of wonder. It's a joyful opportunity to build connections across grade levels while exploring big ideas together.

This year, *The Littlest Drop* by Sasha Alper, with illustrations by Jerry Pinkney and Brian Pinkney, offered a perfect lens for exploring themes of kindness, belonging, courage, and the incredible things that happen when small actions come together to make a big impact. In the story, a fire threatens the forest, and a tiny hummingbird continues to carry drops of water, inspiring the larger animals to join in. Together, students explored the power of individual action, unity, and care for the world around us.

The week unfolded in a thoughtful and engaging progression for students. To begin the week, students were invited to decorate and design their 2026 One Story Week t-shirts, bringing their own creativity and connection to the story to life. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, students worked in mixed-age groups (pre-K through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade), participating in a variety of hands-on, collaborative activities. On Thursday afternoon, students came together to meet one of *The Littlest Drop* illustrators, [Brian Pinkney](#).

We were thrilled to welcome Brian Pinkney to Westtown Lower School this year. Brian shared his journey as a creator, from growing up in a family of artists to developing his own voice as both a writer and illustrator. He spoke about the importance of practice, creativity, and perseverance, and gave students a glimpse into how his ideas grow from simple sketches into fully realized stories. His warmth and humor made a lasting impression on our students.

Leading up to their assembly with Brian Pinkney, throughout the week, students collaborated across grade levels, building connections as they engaged in experiences rooted in *The Littlest Drop*'s themes. Activities included: Creating collaborative murals, designing kindness water droplets, learning and



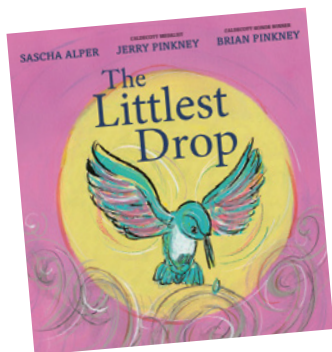
performing a song with accompanying American Sign Language (ASL), reenacting parts of the story, participating in teamwork-based relay challenges, and exploring science concepts like water volume and surface tension.

One Story Week is a reminder of what makes Westtown Lower School such a special place. It's a week centered on children, their curiosity, their creativity, and their capacity to learn from and with one another. Watching students collaborate across grade levels, take pride in their creations, and engage so thoughtfully with the story has been a true highlight. The success of One Story Week is made possible by an extraordinary team of educators who pour their energy into every activity, lesson, and interaction with students. We are grateful for their care and dedication in bringing this experience to life. We hope our students carry these experiences, connections, and ideas with them well beyond this week.

—Karyn Payton, Lower School Principal

Lower School Science teacher Colby Van Alen leads workshop on surface tension during One Story Week.

Enjoy the gallery of photos at this QR code!





Cardboard Carnival

Science Teacher **Carlos Charriez** gave his seventh graders a design thinking task: create a carnival for your clients—Westtown fourth graders. Teacher Carlos gave them the following criteria for their carnival activities: they must be fun, engaging, challenging, made with cardboard, and cater to fourth graders. For this task, students divided into teams to interview their clients and assess their needs and wants. They asked their clients and themselves about the best and worst elements of carnivals they'd been to and began to brainstorm ideas, then winnow them. Next they designed and made prototypes of their carnival games and activities. They tested their designs, got feedback, reflected on ways to make them better, and improved them. The project culminated in the Cardboard Carnival in which the fourth grade clients came to the Science Center to enjoy the final products, and enjoy them they did! See more of the carnival at the QR code.



GREEN(EST) RESTAURANT AWARD

The Green Restaurant Association has named Westtown School's Dining Room the **Greenest K-12 School Cafeteria** in the country! Our on-site composting program, sustainable waste management practices, locally (and hyper-locally, from our minifarm and greenhouse) sourced foods, and vegan and vegetarian meal options were all

factors in this designation. Westtown's Dining Room was awarded a Four Star Green Restaurant designation in 2024, and this latest award is a testament to ongoing improvements in our program.

We are very proud and thanks go to Dining Services Director **Beth Pellegrino** and the amazing Dining Services team, as well as



Director of Sustainability **Francine Locke** and the Sustainability Committee who work diligently to foster sustainable practices across our community!

NEWS FROM AROUND 'TOWN

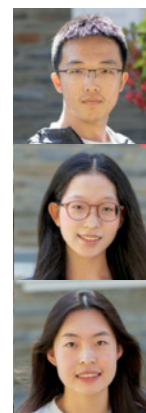


AWARDS SCIENCE FAIR

This year, five students competed in the Chester County Science Research Competition: **Megan Mou '28, Kai Xu '28, Zimo Li '27, Mary Chen '27, and Daisy Zhuang '27.**

Zimo Li placed first in 11th Grade Earth and Space Science, Megan Mou placed first in 10th Grade Engineering and second place over all, and Daisy Zhuang placed first for 11th Grade Behavioral Sciences.

Since the three of them placed first in their grade and category, they were qualified to compete in the Delaware Valley Science Fair on April 1 at the convention center at Oaks, PA. At DVSF, Megan won first place in the 10th grade engineering category. She also won several special awards including first place from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers – Philadelphia Section, an Office of Naval Research Naval Science Award, and an honorable mention from the Society of Women Engineers – Philadelphia. Congratulations to all!





8TH GRADE VISIT

Semi Global Schools

Representatives came from Semi Global Schools came to visit our eighth grade's Sustainability and Stewardship class. They introduced our students to Micro:bits which are programmable, pocket-sized computers that can be programmed to measure light, sound, temperature, movement, and magnetism. The class has been learning about the impacts of air quality on our environment and health. With the use of the Micro:bits, students will be able to measure Westtown's air quality and keep a data log to analyze air quality trends on our campus.

Epiphanies Launch

Congratulations to the *Epiphanies* staff on their launch of this year's issue of Westtown's literary magazine! *Epiphanies* features work from Upper School students including poetry, short stories, photography, and art. Editor-in-Chief **Tiantong Hu '26** shared, "It has been a real honor for me to work with the other editors to bring this issue to life. We spent a lot of time in meetings together carefully choosing which literary and artistic pieces to include. I am so grateful to all the students who submitted their work. Their contributions really helped us create a diverse and vibrant magazine that represents so many different voices here at Westtown. I also want to thank **T. Beth [Cope]**, our advisor, for all her support and guidance throughout the process. We hope that by sharing this digital copy, more people will get to hear the creative voices of our student body." You can read a digital version of this issue at the QR code.



CHESCO BAND FEST

In February, six students from fifth and sixth grades were selected to perform in this year's Chesco Band Fest: **Jonathan D'Alessandro '32, Hugo Charriez '32, Lucas Donatelli '32, Charlie Maloney '33, Jackson Silva '32, and Alex Wahlen '33**. The festival hosted over 100 fifth and sixth grade band students from around Chester County representing 25 schools. Students spent the day rehearsing with a guest conductor in preparation for an evening concert the same day. This year students worked with Mr. Ryan Fegley, a longtime educator from the Unionville/Chadds Ford School District. Congratulations to our talented musicians and our thanks to music teacher **Jason Wu** for facilitating this opportunity for our student musicians!





Women's History Panel: Stephanie Katz, Kahlilah Dowe, and Vale Jokisch

WOMEN'S HISTORY PANEL

March was Women's History Month, and this is the fourth year that volunteer seventh and eighth grade students organized a student-moderated panel to celebrate the women in our community. This year's theme for Women's History Month was: *Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future*. Middle School parents **Kahlilah Dowe**, **Vale Jokisch**, and **Stephanie Katz** came to speak on the Women's History Panel. The panelists shared valuable experiences and important messages with students that included themes of being your authentic self and not hiding your unique gifts. The students say that their goal is to "highlight the myriad journeys and experiences of women." Thank you to our parent panelists for sharing your experiences and wisdom!

Deep Dive Certificates

The Deep Dive Certificate Program honors Upper School students who are engaged in an intentional, organized, and well-documented arc of immersive learning and focused scholarship. This program offers students the opportunity to explore study in particular areas of interest and Deep Dive certificates are offered in: Data-Driven Change; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice; Global Leadership; and Sustainability Leadership.

Each of the Deep Dives are individually designed by each student, but have a common framework such as, building a portfolio of specific interdisciplinary academic requirements, off-campus immersive experiences, extracurricular activities, and a capstone project that ties together their learning and experiences into a cogent, reflective whole. They present their projects to peers and the community at the end of the year. The Deep Dives represent a tremendous amount of independent scholarly work and are a significant academic achievement that is reflected on their transcripts. At the end of the school year, 16 members of the Class of 2026 were awarded Deep Dive certificates. Our congratulations to the following recipients!

DEEP DIVE CERTIFICATES

Data-Driven Change

Ben D'Alessandro, Quinlin McLearn

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Lucy Li, Logan Luo, Gabriela Poyo, Betty Savage

Global Leadership

Camille Bley, Sage Brown, Melissa Freeman, Catherine Ingino

Sustainability Leadership

Miguel Wenderoth Bachiller, Insaaf Imtiyaz, Tessa Kipnis, Mia Saks, Max Zhang



NEWS FROM AROUND 'TOWN

HONOR SOCIETIES

Congratulations to the 28 new members and renewal of 19 returning members into **Las Alas**, Westtown's chapter of the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica (Spanish Honor Society). Las Alas recognizes students who have demonstrated high academic achievement in Spanish and a commitment to the study of Hispanic language and culture. As part of this national honor society, members are recognized for their excellence while also joining a community that promotes interest in Hispanic studies, cultural understanding, and leadership. ¡Felicidades, estudiantes!

The National Chinese Honor Society was established in November 1993. Its objective is to acknowledge the superior achievement of secondary school students studying Chinese as a second language. Like other honor societies, the National Chinese Honor Society not only recognizes high scholastic achievement but also good character, leadership, and service. National Chinese Honor Society members should exemplify all these standards. The Society's goal is to promote enthusiasm for Chinese language and culture learning, commitment to advanced study, and greater cross-cultural understanding. This is also the third year that we added the "National Junior Scholars for Excellence in Chinese" award for our eligible Middle School eighth grade Mandarin students to

recognize their achievement in the study of Chinese language and culture.

After reviewing their Chinese course work throughout their middle school and high school years, examining the national standards set forth, and discussing the many qualifications of gifted students, the Westtown School chapter of the National Chinese Honor Society was pleased to induct 10 new members into the society and renew 10 students' memberships, as well as award seven Middle School students into the National Chinese Junior Scholar in Chinese.



Book Buddies

Every year, seventh graders work with the Primary Circle students over two months to co-author and illustrate a book. The Book Buddies discuss the elements and structure of storytelling, then create a story together. When the books have been created, seventh graders present these one-of-a-kind treasures to their buddies at the launch party and celebrate with popsicles! This project, initiated years ago by then Middle School English teacher **Judy Asselin '71**, is guided by English Language Arts teacher **Abby Lausch**. See more photos at this QR code!



SHOEMAKER
VISITING
LECTURER

Sapphira Cristál

We were thrilled to welcome Sapphira Cristál to Westtown as our Shoemaker Visiting Lecturer! A classically trained musician with a six-octave range, fourteen drag pageant titles, and international recognition as runner-up and Miss Congeniality on *RuPaul's Drag Race* Season 16, Sapphira dazzled our community with an aria, a lecture focused on self-love and acceptance, and a show-stopping lip-sync. The next day, she met with our theater students as well as students from the Westtown Affinity Group for Gender and Sexuality (WAGGS). As Quakers, we're called to see the Light in every person, with particular attention to those whose identities have been historically marginalized. Guided by educator Elyssa Maxx Goodman's definition of drag as "performance of the gender spectrum on and off stage," we're reminded that the ways we dress, the personas we inhabit, and the ways we show up in the world make drag a deeply human art form—one we all participate in.



CELEBRATIONS
AND OBSERVANCES

MLK Day

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, all three divisions studied his work and legacy. In Lower School, students had a Day of Service, collecting donations of basic necessities for families in need in partnership with the non-profit Circle of Giving 2020. Service is not only central to the mission of Westtown School, but also an essential part of our Quaker beliefs, alongside social responsibility, justice, and peacemaking. Lower Schoolers started their day in Gathering, honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights activists through readings, poetry, and song. Then they rotated through stations to package the donations and reflect on the shared readings.

In Middle School, January was dedicated to community learning and celebration centered on the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Over the course of the month, the three grades each had a unique focus. Eighth graders learned about the role music plays in the Civil Rights Movement. Seventh graders focused on community by exploring the *Ubuntu* philosophy, a South African concept of “I am because we are.” Sixth graders learned about service, to begin to understand service learning, and engaged in service projects. Some of the activities included a performance of the musical *Bridges* by the Philly Sound Exchange, a special Meeting for Worship rooted in Dr. King’s teachings, and a visit from folks at CityWorks that prepared sixth graders for one of their service projects. Finally, seventh graders interviewed members of the school community, reflecting on the impact that we all have on each other.

In Upper School, students explored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of nonviolent direct action through a



screening of the film *Boycott*, which chronicles the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Dr. King’s emergence as a national leader, before breaking into advisory groups for reflection and dialogue. Students examined Dr. King’s understanding of nonviolence as a disciplined, intentional practice rooted in moral courage and preparation—not passivity. Drawing clear connections to Quaker testimonies of peace, justice, and integrity, students reflected on the four steps of nonviolent action—information gathering, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action—and considered the responsibility each individual holds in working toward a more just and compassionate world.

In these Upper School discussions, students also examined how nonviolent movements can be strengthened, or undermined, by public perception. Drawing on research and historical examples, students explored how negative stereotypes and delegitimizing language have often been used to justify repression, even in nonviolent

Lower School Students assembled necessity bags for the Circle of Giving organization as part of their Day of Service.

campaigns. They reflected on the importance of allyship, the role of narrative and moral clarity, and the responsibility individuals with privilege may hold in advancing justice. These themes echoed the film *Boycott* and Dr. King’s insistence that nonviolence is both a moral commitment and a strategic practice, grounded in courage, discipline, and collective responsibility. Students also reflected on the historical role Quakers played in shaping traditions of non-violent resistance and the ways these practices continue to inform movements for justice today. Through discussion, students considered their own gifts, responsibilities, and the moral courage required to live out the values of peace, social responsibility, and active engagement—core commitments shared by Dr. King and the Quaker tradition.

YOUTH ART MONTH AWARDEES

Congratulations to the five Middle Schoolers who were featured in this year's PAEA Youth Art Month Exhibition—**Keira Bartholomae '30**, **Jena Farhan '30**, **Annsley Frazier '31**, **Pedro Giraldo Lozano '30**, and **Sam Lehmann '31**! This statewide virtual exhibition is organized by the Pennsylvania Art Educators Association as part of Youth Art Month (March) as part of the annual nationwide celebration administered by The Council for Art Education and The National Art Educators Association. Youth Art Month recognizes and applauds the power of visual arts education and the skills student artists develop through problem-solving, creativity, observation, and visual communication. A special congratulations to Keira, whose ink drawing "Old Shack" (right, using black walnut ink from our local trees) was selected by a jury of professional working artists as this year's PAEA Youth Art Month Middle School Division Award! Well done, artists!



UNDER THE SEA

Second graders dove deep for their unit on sea life! Each student researched a sea animal and wrote a book about their topic, then made dioramas or stop-motion videos in art class to show the animal in its habitat. At the conclusion of the unit, they hosted a fair to show their work. At the fair, they had the opportunity to share their new knowledge of sea life as other Lower School classes came to learn about the different sea creatures, ask questions, and admire their projects. The books and videos were so well done and the students did a wonderful job talking about what they learned with other students.



Stan-X

Congratulations to the Molecular Biology Advanced class, who presented their poster on "Observing Successful Transpositions of the P-Element: SX4[WTT1921] - SX4[WTT1925]" at the Stan-X conference at Lawrenceville School. Our students joined with six other schools to share their findings as they attempted to create new strains of fruit flies, each having their P-element moved into a different location.





Left: A few from the China group on The Great Wall. Opposite: The Ghana group, some in their attire handmade by a local seamstress

SPRING TRIPS

Around the Globe

Some of the most rewarding experiences that Westtown offers don't happen here on campus. They happen all over the world through school-sponsored trips. This past spring, student groups traveled to China, Ghana, Italy, and Washington, DC. Each of these trips provided unique and distinct experiences, ones that expanded our students' language acquisition, cultural competence, sense of personal agency, and world view. Read on to learn more about each adventure.

Led by teacher **Bei Zhang**, along with co-chaperones **Robert Frazier**, **Jacob Norton**, **Janiel Samuels**, and **Nina Li**, a group of 35 students traveled to China over spring break. This 14-day adventure

began in Beijing where students visited Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium, and the Summer Palace. They enjoyed a dragon boat ride, had a tai chi lesson, the dined on Peking Duck, among other special experiences in Beijing. They were fortunate to also visit a section of then Great Wall of China that is one of the best preserved, and less traveled by tourists.

From Beijing the group travelled to Xi'an where students took a calligraphy class, visited the Terracotta Army archeological dig site, and enjoyed a street food market in the city's Muslim quarter. A highlight was that Westtown student **Angela Feng '28** and her parents hosted

the group in Xi'an and all the students and adults traveled back to the Tang Dynasty, wore cultural Tang outfits, and enjoyed an imperial palace style dinner with performances.

The next stop was Chendgu where another Westtown student, **Mary Chen '27**, and her family hosted the group. Shares Zhang, "We had an amazing hot pot dinner in a famous traditional alley called Kuan Zhai Xiang Zi, and enjoyed many traditional performances such as Face-changing performance, Kung Fu tea performance, Chinese traditional dances, and panda hip-hop. **Felicia Chang '28** treated the group to a well-known Chinese bubble tea called Xi Tea."

On a day trip to Dujiangyan, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the group took in the Chinese countryside, learned about the irrigation system, a feat of engineering dating back to 256 BCE.

The trip came to a close in Shanghai where students experienced the Shanghai World Financial Center, walked along the Bund, and visited the Jade Buddha Temple and the Yu Garden.

This experience made a deep impact on students. "[This] trip was life changing," says **Camille Bley '26**. "I've been learning Chinese since seventh grade, and although I have immersed myself outside of class, nothing has compared to being in China. It was so fulfilling to be able to use what I had learned in the classroom in real-world situations, like asking for food recommendations and directions. I was able to explore many cities and cultural sites while also interacting with the local community." **Leila Alobeidy '28** adds, "The China trip was one of my best life experiences because we had so much fun while exploring somewhere totally new. We got to talk to locals and learn at amazing historic sites most people only dream of seeing

and try all sorts of new things that we couldn't on a regular trip. It's amazing that the school can sponsor such an incredible program!"

Zhang sums up the experience, "It was amazing to see China through our students' eyes. I am super proud of how they embraced the trip with an open mind and lots of curiosity, branched out and stepped out of their comfort zone, made new friends and cared for each other, and used their language skills and cultural knowledge throughout our trip. It was also wonderful that some of our Westtown Chinese students and parents met up with us and hosted us in different cities in China, which made our trip extra special and memorable."

After several months of orientation sessions, fourteen students and trip leaders **Lynette Assarsson**, **Marissa Colston**, and **Joseph Daniels** embarked upon a 12-day trip to Ghana, a signature trip offering at Westtown since 2008. This trip offers cultural immersion, the opportunity to build relationships, learning about the history of the transatlantic trade of the enslaved, and experience in the classroom setting. The trip centers around our sister school, Heritage Academy, founded by former Westtown faculty member Kwesi Koomson in his hometown of Breman Essiam.

When the group arrived at Heritage Academy, they were met with a beautiful and moving welcoming ceremony by the students and teachers at Heritage. Westtown students immediately dove into this experience, some joining the traditional dance. They spent a week teaching classes to Heritage Academy's middle school students. This year's group offered classes in animal biology, arts and crafts, creative writing, dance, physical education, and teambuilding/soccer. All students also worked with small groups of Heritage students in the Reading Program each day, which helps them with reading, comprehension, and pronunciation skills in English. Our students were deeply engaged in

their teaching and many shared that they learned as much from the Heritage students as they taught them.

After the school day, the group made cement blocks by hand as their service project for Heritage. They completed an impressive 208 blocks, a record for Westtown groups! Westtown students have been making blocks for the past several trips which have been used for building repairs and—most significantly—to construct a new middle school building, which Heritage has named Westtown Hall in honor of the many visits and service projects by Westtown School groups over the years. At the end of the group's time at Heritage, the closing ceremony included speeches by school officials, music, and dance, and each Westtown participant was presented with a Kente cloth sash with their names embroidered on it, a personal and meaningful gift of thanks.

On the weekends, the group took excursions to important historical and cultural sites. Students learned about the history of the transatlantic trade of the enslaved through tours of the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. Elmina was the first permanent European structure built in sub-Saharan Africa and the first European slave-trading post. Cape Coast Castle was one of the largest and most

horrific posts. These tours were powerful experiences that made brutal history come to life. In Accra, a trip to the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park provided more history about Ghana's struggle for independence and Nkrumah's life and leadership.

The group also enjoyed the beautiful landscapes of Ghana spending time on the coast and in Kakum National Park, where they braved the roped network of canopy bridges high above the rainforest floor, and tasted raw cocoa beans.

The entire experience was marked by authentic cultural immersion. The group stayed in a guest house together in the small village of Ajumako which not only afforded them opportunities to get to know neighbors and experience community life, but also provided them with a home base for sharing meals, relaxing, and bonding as a group. They enjoyed traditional foods like groundnut soup and jollof rice and learned to pound *fufu*. They went to several local market days to hone their bargaining skills and practice a bit of the Fante language. At the markets, they purchased fabrics and Sister Sarah, a seamstress neighbor, made clothing and bags for them.

"This was an extraordinary group and a transformative experience," shares trip leader Lynette Assarsson. "It was





Left: Students at the crater of Mt. Vesuvius.
Opposite: FCNL lobby spring trip

‘Fortes fortuna iuvat!’— fortune favors the brave.

a privilege to watch our students grow and learn through this journey. They were deeply engaged with teaching and developed real relationships with their students. They were committed to the service project, putting in hard work at the end of long, hot days. They reveled in being in the community and soaked up every opportunity for interaction. This is a physically and emotionally intense trip and our students rose to meet it with a deep sense of curiosity, openness, good humor, and grace.

It was a joy to share this adventure with them.” Watch a video of their experience at this QR code.



Trip leader **Ted Freeman** and co-chaperone **Sarah Wahlberg** led the trip to Italy. Freeman shares, “This spring, we traveled to Italy with a group of fourteen students in an effort to bring the ancient world to life beyond the classroom. For

Latin students, forging a meaningful connection to the culture they study can be challenging; texts and translations, however rich, sometimes feel distant from lived experience. The goal of this trip was to bridge that gap—allowing students to encounter firsthand the enduring legacy of the ancient world and to see how deeply the past continues to shape the present.

“A central feature of the trip was our practice of *loci in locis*—reading Latin passages in the very places to which they refer. This approach transforms ancient texts into something immediate and vivid. Our journey began in the Bay of Naples, where we explored the remarkable archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Walking their streets, preserved in ash and time, students were able to visualize daily life in the Roman world with striking clarity. We then climbed to the summit of Mount Vesuvius, the volcano whose catastrophic

eruption in 79 AD buried both cities. From that vantage point, students could better grasp the scale of the disaster described in their texts. Our visit continued to Baiae and Cape Miseno, where Pliny the Elder launched his fateful rescue mission. Reading the account of his nephew, Pliny the Younger, gave new weight to his famous declaration, ‘*Fortes fortuna iuvat!*’—fortune favors the brave. What might otherwise be a line encountered on a page became, in that setting, a moment of human urgency and courage. Experiences like these underscore for students that Latin is not merely an academic subject, but a language that captures real lives, choices, and events.

“The second half of our journey centered on Rome, a city whose history spans more than three millennia. While iconic monuments such as the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, and the Pantheon offered students a sense of Rome’s grandeur and architectural achievement, some of the most meaningful experiences came from less conspicuous sites.

“Among these, a highlight for many was the Basilica of San Clemente, which uniquely encapsulates the layered complexity of Rome’s past. At street level, it appears to be a relatively modest twelfth-century church—especially when compared to monumental basilicas like St. Peter’s or San Giovanni in Laterano. Yet beneath its surface lies a remarkable historical palimpsest. Descending one level, we entered a fourth-century basilica adorned with frescoes depicting the life and martyrdom of St. Clement. Descending further still, we reached a first-century Roman domus, complete with a Mithraic temple, revealing a much older stratum of religious and domestic life.

To explore San Clemente is, quite literally, to move backward through time. For students, this physical experience of historical layering reinforced a central theme of the trip: that Rome is not simply a city of ruins, but a living record of continuous transformation. Across Italy, and especially in Rome, they encountered a world in which past and present coexist—deepening their understanding of the texts they study and enriching their appreciation for the civilization that produced them.

“Our trip concluded on the summit of the Gianciolo, a hilltop west of the Tiber overlooking the Vatican and all of Rome. A busker was crooning classic Italian love songs. Three of our students joined in and treated the crowd to a thrilling rendition of ‘Stand by Me.’ As the sun set over the hilltop, so too did it set on our trip.”

In April, religion teachers **Jonathan Ogle '88** and **Becky Wilkinson** took seven students to Washington, DC, for the Friends Committee on National Legislation's annual Spring Lobby Weekend, a series of workshops and events for students, recent grads, Quakers, and young adults to learn about lobbying Congress. Each year there is a particular focus and this year's was militarism home and abroad.

Ogle shared, “We joined over a hundred other participants from all over the country, from college students to community activists, to retired, seasoned Quaker lobbyists. Two other high schools sent delegations as well—Sidwell Friends in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore Friends School in Baltimore—but most of the attendees were young adults or much older, all there to talk to Congressional offices. The topic was opposing militarism at home and abroad. Specifically, we were there to tell Congress not to approve billions of dollars in supplemental funding for the Iran war.

“Saturday and Sunday were intense days of taking notes on panels of experts

knowledgeable about Iranian history and politics, U.S.–Iranian relations, military and legal dimensions of the war, and the behind-the-scenes politics of Congressional offices.

“Supplemental workshops included protest art, careers in social change, and learning about the militarization of law enforcement and immigration law over the last fifty years. After add-on workshops where we learned to identify and practice telling stories about why we care about whether Congress funds this war and training in how to have effective conversations with decision makers, we were ready to assign roles and practice for our conversations with Congressional staffers. On Tuesday, we packed our bags, loaded the van, and headed for Capitol Hill to make our appointments with Congress.

“Students shared with staffers their moral concerns about the costs of war and unmet needs for funding in our home communities for hospitals, for example. They also shared stories about people they knew struggling with the idea of being forced to fight and kill people in a war of choice that is in violation of the War Powers Act. On the Senate side, Pennsylvania senator John

Fetterman's staffers were sympathetic, but also clear that he did not support our ask. Nonetheless, they encouraged us to keep bringing the issues forward. Senator McCormick's staff member was polite but also clear that he believes the war is going well and that the outcomes will be positive for the U.S.

“We then headed to the House side, where most of the group had a productive visit with Representative Chrissy Houlihan's office and others also visited Representative Dwight Evans' office and had conversation with Representative Mary Gay Scanlon. In all of those offices, there was a positive reception to the students' messages. Students came home tired but also energized to use their deeper knowledge of the democratic political process to stay engaged around these issues and continue exercising their voices in our democracy. They are organizing an on-campus Westtown club to participate year-round in FCNL's efforts to lobby Congress.”

Westtown's school-sponsored trip program continues to expand and next year trips will be offered to Peru, Eastern Europe, Scotland/England, Spain, and Japan/Korea, as the China, Ghana, and Italy trips are offered every other year.



Metal Moose's Stellar Season

The Metal Moose robotics team 1391, along with FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics teams across the world, was given the challenge for this competition season in January. The challenge comes with specific parameters of the game. This year's game was called REBUILT and the objective was that the robot had to pick up yellow balls called "fuel" and shoot them into a tall box called the "hub." It's then up to the teams to build a robot that can complete this task with precision and ready it for competitions. After months of prototyping, designing, building, and programming,

the team attended their first competition in the second week of March at Seneca High School in Tabernacle, NJ. They were the captains of Alliance 3 and won the Quality Award, which celebrates machine's robustness in concept and fabrication. Over spring break they continued to work on their robot, which they had dubbed Rufus.

Their second competition was in the first week of April in Philadelphia. The Metal Moose ranked first, winning the event with the team from Friends Central School and another team from Maryland. Additionally, they won the FIRST Impact Award, which is the most prestigious award in FIRST robotics. The

Impact Award recognizes teams that best exemplify the mission of FIRST and serve as a model for other teams to emulate. This competition was the most successful in the team's history, as they ranked first, captained the first alliance, won the event, and also won the Impact Award. Additionally, **Maitreyi Vadigepalli '27** won the FIRST Leadership Award which "recognizes outstanding secondary school students (in their 10th or 11th grade school year) who demonstrate exceptional leadership, technical expertise, entrepreneurship, and a deep commitment to advancing the mission of FIRST Inspire."

The team qualified for the District Championship held at Lehigh University in mid April. At that competition, they were selected to be a part of the 4th Alliance, and qualified for the World Championship in Houston, Texas. The World Championship is for the top 600 teams of nearly 4,000 in the world. They were ranked #173 in the world, a testament to the hard work and talent of the team. Vadigepalli also won the FIRST Leadership Award at the district level, which is given to the top four students out of nearly 5,000 in our district.



At the World Championship they finished their season ranked in the top 5% in the world, and 6th in the state of Pennsylvania out of 77 teams. The students report that they had “an amazing time” at Worlds and are happy with the season.

Robotics coach, **Steve Compton**, adds, “The Metal Moose has qualified for the World Championship in 11 of the last 12 years, and finished this season in the top 5% in the world out of 3724 teams.” These are impressive statistics, but Compton is quite proud of the team’s Impact Award, which honors the team’s outreach and mission. “This award is held to be the highest team culture award in the FIRST ecosystem, and honors teams that do good in the world.” According to the FIRST organization, “The Impact Award is the most prestigious award at FIRST. It honors the team that best represents a model for other teams to emulate and best embodies the mission of FIRST. It was created to keep the central focus of FIRST Robotics Competition on the ultimate goal of transforming the culture in ways that will inspire greater levels of respect and honor for science and technology, as well as encouraging more of today’s youth to become science and technology leaders.” Indeed, much for the Metal Moose and our community to be proud of.

CLIMATE SUMMIT

Westtown School and Germantown Friends School (GFS) sent a delegation to the United Nations COP30 climate summit in Belém, Brazil. At the thirtieth annual COP (Conference of the Parties) summit, delegates from 194 countries across the globe gathered to address the climate crisis collaboratively.

Representing Westtown were **Sarah Lan '27**, **Chris Wills**, Associate Head of School for Program and Community, and **Francine Locke**, Director of Sustainability at Westtown School and GFS. They traveled with **Justin J. Harris**, Executive Director of the Climate Equity Collaborative (CEC), a climate-action and education organization that focuses on youth and underserved communities. The CEC developed an immersive program for the delegates that included education and discussion sessions, rainforest tours, meetings with leaders in Indigenous communities, and volunteer opportunities—all in addition to attending COP30 sessions.

Students had the opportunity to concentrate on specific topics. Sarah—in addition to two GFS students—focused on blue carbon ecosystems, ocean restoration, and renewable energy. She was particularly interested in one of the presenters, from the State University of Amazonas, who developed a technological tool that focused on monitoring the water quality of the Amazon rivers.

The delegation also met with **Keith Runyan**, General Secretary, Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW). Over a dinner together, Keith shared his thoughts on the interconnectedness between Quakerism and climate action, and the group engaged in a robust conversation together. “We made deliberate connections with Quaker organizations this year, like the QEW

and the Quaker United Nations Office [QUNO],” says Wills. “To explore these really big ideas with frameworks that are simple and that our students already know and understand because we live those out here on campus every day was very valuable.”

The conference availed the students of important proximity to the mechanisms of action and allowed them a close-up look at how change can be made and at what’s both effective and ineffective in bringing about change. “In a time of shifting climate policy, the perspective of the next generation is a critical force for change,” says Locke. “COP30 provided our students with an unparalleled laboratory for climate action. By bridging the gap between the classroom and global diplomacy, we are preparing our students to serve as the advocates and stewards our planet urgently needs.”

Wills adds that students witnessed, “the interconnectedness of all of these larger systems that come together to work against climate change. Students were able to see how the levers of capitalism are functioning on a global scale and understand the ways that change can happen at a grassroots level, a policy level, and then at a global initiative level. So being able to separate those things to see where one can have an impact in different kinds of contexts was pretty incredible for our students.”

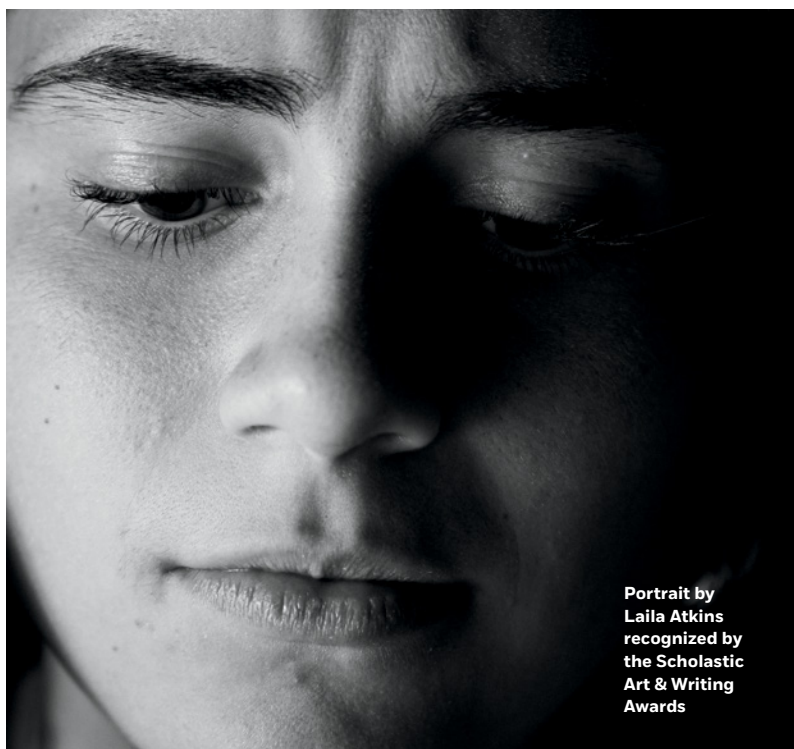




Lunar New Year Celebrations

In February, the celebrations of Lunar New Year enlivened campus. In Lower and Middle Schools, students and teachers wore red, considered to be a lucky and joyous color that brings happiness and prosperity in many Asian cultures, and the lobbies were adorned in celebration.

In the Upper School, the Lunar New Year Community Dinner was a spectacular event with delicious food, beautiful decorations, and lovely performances, which included a dramatic dragon dance, a traditional Chinese instrument performance, and Middle and Upper School Mandarin classes singing songs. A student performed “Bian Lian,” Chinese face changing, and other dances were shared before the community was invited to visit classrooms in the Main Hall where 18 different cultural stations had been set up. Guests were invited to attempt Chinese yoyo, have their palms read, and try their hands at calligraphy, among many other activities. It was a grand evening of shared food, traditions, and community. Our thanks to the Asian Student Association (ASA), International Student Organization (ISO), and teacher **Bei Zhang** for the amazing celebration!



Portrait by
Laila Atkins
recognized by
the Scholastic
Art & Writing
Awards

Arts & Writing Awards

This year, several Westtown students submitted work for the Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards, a national program and recognizes teen creativity with awards and scholarship money.

Writing awards were presented to **Preston Morefield '27**, who earned two Silver Keys and one Honorable Mention for his work, and **Jamila Burgos '27**, who was awarded one Silver Key and one Honorable Mention for her work.

Arts awards were granted to **Peter Li '28**, **Lucas Gong '29**, **Laila Atkins '27**, and **Oliver Daughenbaugh '27**, all of whom earned Honorable Mentions. Congratulations to all!



Living Museum

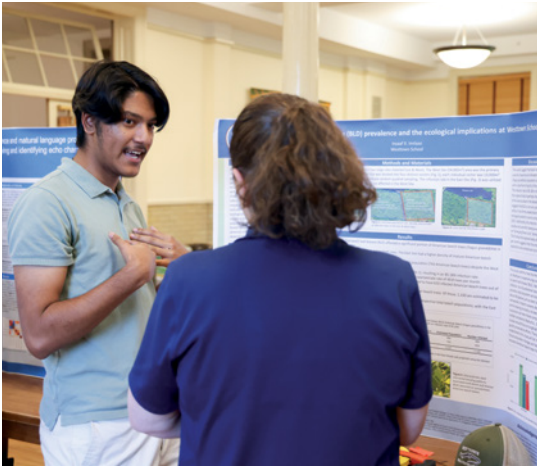
At the end of the year, fourth graders transformed the Lower School into a Living Museum, inviting families and fellow students to step into history through the voices and stories of influential abolitionists. As the culminating project of their yearlong social studies curriculum—spanning history of this continent from pre-European contact through the abolishment of slavery—students brought historical figures to life through research, storytelling, and performance. From courageous acts of resistance to powerful movements for freedom and justice, the museum highlighted the work, struggles, and lasting impact of abolitionists whose voices helped shape history. We are proud of the work and care our students put into this project under the guidance and leadership of fourth grade teachers **Marion Dear '83** and **Shelagh Wilson '85**. See more in the museum gallery at this QR code!



Insaaf Imtiyaz '26 presents his poster "Assessing Beech Leaf Disease and the Ecological Implications at Westtown School"

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH POSTER SESSIONS

Students in the Upper School Scientific Research class pursued areas of study such as biomedical research, molecular biology, animal physiology, biomechanics, and more. Throughout the year, students reviewed primary literature, developed protocols, and analyzed data. This course culminated in the preparation of a formal lab report written in a style suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and the presentation of a scientific poster at the end of the year. This course requires a great deal of initiative, follow-through, and independent work, both in and out of the lab and the research presented at the poster session represents an immense body of work.





Advanced Environmental Research student coring a tree for study and documentation for the forestry database.

FOREST FIELD STUDY

Science Rooted in Place

Over the past few years, teacher **Ryan Black**'s Advanced Environmental Science Field Research classes have been studying Westtown's forests. One of their goals has been to build a forestry database. This spring they reached a major milestone by surveying their 50th tree and coring more than 20 trees across campus. From tulip poplars in the South Woods to eastern white pines along Westtown Lake, students collected real field data, such as height, diameter at breast height (DBH), and logs. This data was used to estimate age, wood volume, carbon sequestration, and economic value. As you might imagine, some of these trees are over 200 years old.

Black says, "The real story lives in the rings. Students extracted and mounted cores using an increment borer, trekking out to the lake multiple times through wet, rainy conditions. They then measured each ring width, calculated the Ring Width Index, and built a detrended master chronology to study past climate, which revealed increased variability in our local climate signal."

He continues, "The project began during the 2023–2024 school year as a pilot study focused on tulip trees in the South Woods. Last year, students surveyed, measured, mapped, and permanently tagged 25 tulip trees, launching a long-term effort to establish a comprehensive Westtown forestry database. This year, students expanded the project by surveying and analyzing 25 eastern white pines along the North Lake Trail, bringing the database to 50 mapped and monitored trees across two forest stands.

"Using traditional forestry techniques, students measured DBH and tree height, estimated tree age through growth factor calculations, tree coring, and dendrochronology analysis, and then used these

measurements to calculate wood volume, carbon storage, and economic value.

Each tree has been permanently tagged with a numbered blue metal marker, and all locations have been mapped using Google Earth, allowing future classes to relocate and remeasure the same individuals over time.

"The broader vision is to add a new dominant tree species from a different forest stand each year, creating a long-term record of Westtown's forests. As the database grows, students will be able to monitor forest growth, carbon sequestration, species composition, and ecological change across campus. We also hope to partner with organizations that have collected tree data at Westtown in the past and incorporate archival records to compare historical and contemporary forest conditions. This will allow future students to ask increasingly sophisticated questions about how our forests have changed and how they may continue to change in the decades ahead.

"One of the most interesting findings was the immense ecological and economic value represented by some of our largest trees. Several individual tulip trees were estimated to store nearly 20 metric tons of carbon dioxide and have retail lumber values exceeding \$30,000. More importantly, the project helped students recognize that mature forests are not just collections of trees, but living systems that provide critical ecological services, store vast amounts of carbon, support biodiversity, and represent generations of natural growth and stewardship. The study also emphasized the ecological importance of old-growth trees and riparian forests, highlighting their unique roles in supporting wildlife habitat, maintaining water quality, enhancing ecosystem resilience, and sustaining biodiversity."



THINK, CARE, ACT FAIR

The Uptown Lounge bustled with seventh graders for the Think, Care, Act Fair at the end of the year. Conceived by teacher **Abby Lausch**, the project entails students identifying their strength, talents, and areas of interest, focusing on what they care about in their community and the world around them, then choosing a service project based on those interests. At the Think, Care, Act Fair, students shared posters and presented their projects to families, teachers, and fellow students. Through this project, each student performs at least 10 hours of service, which together makes almost 500 hours of community service at a wide variety of local organizations.

Enjoy more photos at the QR code.





The Arts Gallery

Our vibrant performing arts program touches the lives of all our students. It gives them rich opportunities for creative expression through music, dance, theater, scenic arts design, sound, and lighting.





Learn more about the Arts at
www.westtown.edu/arts



FIELDS & COURTS



See more sports
updates online at
www.westtown.edu/athletics

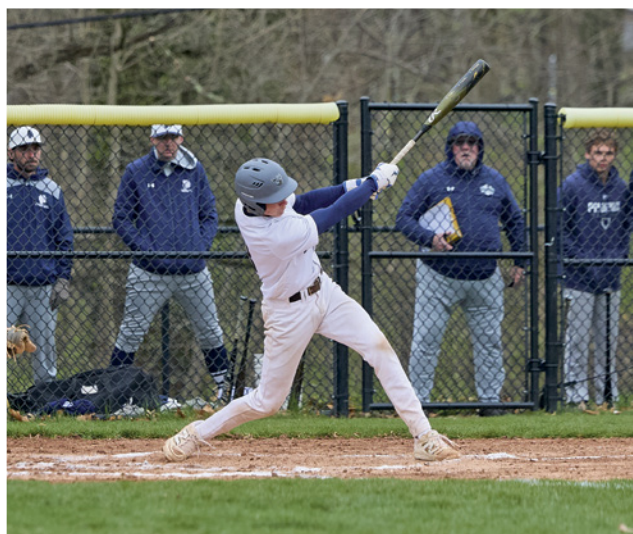


Fields & Courts

There was exciting sporting news this spring!

- The boys varsity lacrosse team took home the Friends Schools League Championship this season.
- The girls lacrosse team advanced to the FSL finals for the first time since 2001.
- The baseball team also advanced to the FSL finals for the first time in a decade.
- Our small but mighty track and field team placed third for the girls in the FSL and fourth for the boys.
- Westtown student-athletes continue to be amongst the best in the FSL, and we took home 28 FSL All-League and Honorable Mention recognitions this spring.





Ellen Abbott

Teacher, Mentor, Friend

BY LYNETTE ASSARSSON

The kind of teacher to whom students write thank you letters. The kind of advisor who offers wisdom and care. The kind of person who becomes a lifelong friend after graduation. The kind of colleague who brings welcome baskets. The kind of community member who ensures that we live out our Quaker values. That is who **Ellen Abbott** is.

A graduate of Brown University who went on to earn an EdM from Harvard, Abbott arrived on campus in 1993, hired to be the Associate Dean and to teach English in the Upper School. She was drawn to Westtown not only for these professional opportunities, but also for “the vibes”—the culture and values resonated deeply with her. Her reasons for staying for 33 years, though, “have changed and developed over the years,” she shares. “It became important to me in ways I hadn’t anticipated that I was at a Quaker school. I appreciated the diversity at Westtown [which is] unlike most independent schools. I came to really appreciate the community. And then I wanted my kids to be here.” Both of her children are alums—Will ’14 and Jane ’18.

Through her years at Westtown, Abbott has held many roles in addition to teaching, among them advisor, Upper School Faculty Clerk, Chair of the English Department, faculty advisor of *Epiphanies* (the student-run literary magazine), class advisor, various deanships, co-leader of a Greece/Italy trip, numerous committees, and was one of the facilitators of AWARE, the Allied Whites Against Racism, for Equity affinity group—work that was deeply important to her. She is highly regarded among faculty and has earned this admiration through her steadfastness to Quaker values in her work and leadership, her dedication to students and to her own learning, and through the genuine relationships she has developed. “Ellen has a preternatural ability to make both students and colleagues feel seen, heard, and valued,” shares colleague **Ted Freeman**. “This led her to being a beloved teacher, whom students trust and respect; an effective dean, who helped students become the best versions of themselves; and a transformative leader as clerk of faculty meeting and department chair, who elevated the work of her colleagues and the school.” This kind of praise for Abbott resounds in the community. **Victoria Jones**, Director of Library Services,



says, “Ellen is a highly respected leader among the faculty. [She] demonstrated powerful leadership and a deep commitment to Westtown’s work in support of equity and belonging... Ellen was also a positive and accessible Upper School Faculty Meeting clerk. She’s also one of my favorite people at Westtown! When she asks you how you are, she really wants to know.”

The best teachers are also learners themselves, and Abbott took advantage of myriad professional growth opportunities. She never stopped learning, honing her craft, exploring new methods, and adjusting her curriculum. Fellow English teacher **Adam Salo ’97** says, “Ellen has always stayed fresh, remained current, and made her lessons relevant so that she is a teacher kids pay attention to. It could be so easy for a seasoned teacher to rest on their notable laurels, but Ellen—even in her final year of teaching—tried new things.” Jones adds, “I have had the opportunity to work with Ellen closely on the senior research paper for years and it is always a joy. The paper has gone through many different iterations, largely because Ellen is always looking to improve upon the curriculum and because she wants to ensure that projects are both meaningful and educational for the students. Her classes were very popular with students because her passion for teaching and literature always comes through.”

For her part, Abbott is invigorated by teaching teenagers and the mix of the intellectual, social, and “messiness” of high schoolers. She says, “I’m someone who likes ideas and I like the intellectual side of teaching and you can do that in Upper School in a way you can’t in other divisions. All teachers learn

things from their students—that’s part of what teaching is—but I get new insights into a text from my students. It happens all the time that students offer ideas and insights about works that I have never thought about before. I think that’s part of why I love it. Working with students—seeing their growth, watching a new idea develop for them, sharing in their creativity and discovery is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job.”

Abbott’s legacy is grounded in the impact she made on countless students in her role as teacher and advisor. They learned from her academically, of course, but she also made them feel important, known, and cared for. Because of this, students often describe her and her classes as some of the most impactful of their high school experience. **Callum Eager ’26** enthuses, “Teacher Ellen has been the most influential teacher I have ever [had] at Westtown. She always has a smile on her face and teaches with such passion that makes it so easy to learn as her student.” **Chloe Costa Baker ’23**, who was also an advisee of Abbott’s, shares, “Ellen always taught with patience, care, and a touch of humor, and everyone I knew loved being in her classes. She made subject matter thorough, accessible, and genuinely enjoyable, not just for those as passionate about English courses as I was, but for all her students.” Student and advisee **Gabriela Poyo ’26** says, “Teacher Ellen cares deeply about understanding and making people feel like they belong. She is a steady presence and does such a good job responding to students whether it be meaningful feedback or pushing us to see new perspectives.”

While Abbott has employed a variety of methods over the years, her teaching philosophy itself is deeply rooted in Quaker values. “I see it as essential to find that of God in every student in my classroom,” she says. “And I’ve always found it. Sometimes it takes longer than I care to admit, but it’s always there!” She becomes visibly emotional when she talks about teaching, a testament to how invested she is in her students. “My job is to really see the students,” she says as her voice breaks. “Sometimes that involves really casual stuff like asking, ‘How was your baseball game?’ And when they share the casual stuff with me, they are more apt to share the bigger things that come along. I get asked to write a lot of college recommendation letters and I think (and I hope) that the reason is that they really know that I know them and that I can speak about them. And I do. I work hard on those letters; I don’t phone it in at all!” Students know this about Abbott very well. English Department colleague **Lizzy Oxler** says that, “There is a reason Ellen has won our (unofficial) competition of who writes the most letters of recommendation in the last few years. The students know she sees them and, most importantly, how deeply she cares for them.” Oxler continues, “There are two phrases we use a lot as a Quaker institution: ‘seeing the light of God in everyone’ and ‘wisdom can come

from any corner of the room’...Ellen embodies these phrases. In our office, I observe meetings with students as they work through ideas for essays and projects, I hear her checking in on how their weekends went, I see her save newspaper clippings for them about their accomplishments, and you can always hear her shouts of celebration in Collection when a student shares great news.”

As a published writer herself—she is the author of the *Watersmeet* trilogy, a young adult fantasy series—Abbott was particularly adept at fostering a love of writing in students and teaching them how to find their voice through creative writing. **Insaaf Imtiyaz ’26** shares, “Teacher Ellen has been a phenomenal teacher to me...She has helped me grow from someone who hated writing to the point of resentment of essay assignments to someone who enjoys composing creative writing such as stories and poems.” **Camille Bley ’26** echoes this sentiment. “Teacher Ellen is an extremely selfless person who is dedicated to the growth of her students. She is very intentional with her assignments and discussions, and I have become a much better writer because she has put so much time and energy into ensuring I improve. I am extremely grateful I had the opportunity to be her student!”

Abbott counts her role as an advisor as an especially significant one and she was deeply committed to providing a caring environment in which students could be themselves, share their struggles, and seek advice. In addition to the regular weekly group advisory time, she also made a point to meet with each advisee individually every two weeks. “I’m not sure advisees know how much they mean to you! It’s such a great connection. It’s a lot to make those [individual] meetings happen, but it’s critical to the success of an advisee relationship.” She has maintained friendships with many former advisees over the years, which speaks to how meaningful those relationships are. Baker says, “Her empathy and sensible guidance got me through many challenges big and small, and her unwavering support and encouragement helped me confidently graduate into adulthood. The amazing thing about Ellen’s gift for mentorship is that I know she managed to do all this not only for me, but for every student who was lucky enough to be part of her advisory throughout the years... I know her impact on the young people who passed through Westtown’s doors has been tremendous, and it’s such a joy to be able to celebrate her in turn as she herself moves on to the next stage.”

Ellen Abbott retired at the end of June, graduating alongside the Class of 2026. This masterful teacher with a kind and capacious heart takes with her a “bulging folder of thank you notes from students over the years” and leaves behind a lasting imprint on our community. We wish her well as she embarks on her next adventure and offer profound thanks for her impact on students, for her leadership, and for her friendship.

One Hundred Years of Gratitude

The Greenwood is one of the most lovely and iconic spaces on this campus. This amphitheater, ensconced at the edge of the North Woods, has provided beautiful and lush surroundings for Shakespeare plays, assemblies, Meetings for Worship, and commencements for a century.

A proposal for an amphitheater on campus was brought to the General Committee (what we now call the Board of Trustees) by the Farm, Forest, and Lawns Committee of the Alumni Association in October of 1925. They were interested in ways to encourage alums to stay in the area after Alumni Day and had been providing entertainment for those who did. They had been using the gymnasium (at that time located on the second floor of the Main Building) and it was too small to accommodate the ever-growing crowds. An amphitheater would house “a good many more people” with an estimated capacity of 1200–1300 people. The intention was to utilize this “open air auditorium” not only for Alumni Day gatherings, but also other entertainment, meetings, and perhaps even graduation ceremonies one day. The report they submitted to the General Committee indicated that students would do the work to create the space and the Alumni Association would pay for both the construction and the continuing care and upkeep.

The Executive Committee of the General Committee reviewed the proposal and minutes show that they agreed it would be an “attractive and helpful addition to the property.” Records also indicate that students did assist in the formation of the amphitheater by clearing the glade. By early 1926, the project was underway and it was hoped that the space would be open in time for Alumni Day in May. Indeed it was, and it was formally inaugurated on that day, May 22, 1926, and the first performance on the new Greenwood stage—an historical scene called “The Old Westtown Fire Bucket”—took place on that day as well.

It was named Greenwood at the suggestion of Marian Rustedt, who taught French from 1918–1926. It is from a line in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene V in which Amiens is singing a song that

begins “Under the greenwood tree...” It is fitting, then, that the Greenwood became the location of Alumni Day Shakespeare plays for years to come. The first Shakespeare performed in the Greenwood was a scene from *Much Ado About Nothing*, on May 6, 1927. The first full Shakespeare production—*The Merchant of Venice*—was staged on Alumni Day, May 21, 1927, beginning a long tradition. Today, English classes still use the Greenwood stage to perform scenes from Shakespeare.

The Greenwood eventually did become the space for Commencement. The Meeting House was the traditional location for many years, but in 1945 it was moved to the Greenwood out of necessity. A senior in the Class of 1945 had contracted polio just before the end of the school year, and there was less risk of the disease spreading if the ceremony was held outside. What began as an emergency pivot is now a cherished tradition; it’s hard to imagine now Commencement anywhere but the Greenwood.

This spring, in celebration of the Greenwood’s 100th anniversary and to ensure the safety of our community, the stone steps in the center aisle were repaired. The Facilities team also resodded and tended the work area so that it was ready in time for the Class of 2026 to process into the Greenwood to receive their diplomas. This lovely work was made possible by the generous support of the Classes of 2022–2025, as well as the Upper School Parents’ Council. We are immensely grateful for their generosity and for the work of our Facilities and Grounds team who keep the Greenwood beautiful all year round. And, we are full of gratitude for the Greenwood itself, which has been the arena for opening-of-school assemblies, the stage upon which students have brought to life plays and found their voices, has been a natural sanctuary for Meetings for Worship, and, most of all, has been a magnificent, verdant cradle that has held thousands of Westonians as they say farewell to Westtown and make their way up those steps and out into the world.

—Lynette Assarsson

(Thank you to Westtown School Archivist Sara Mullen for her contributions to this piece.)



CLASS OF

2022



6







CLASS OF

20
26



Graduation Essays

Each year, seniors write a personal reflective essay. Three were selected to be read at Commencement by a faculty committee. The fourth essay was written and read by the valedictorian who was elected by the senior class to speak on their behalf. These essays represent the character and intellect of our students, as well as the diversity of experiences within our community. We share their essays here.

TIANTONG HU

I hated that wall in the girls bathroom in Balderston: the tiles and the narrow cracks between them. The wall was cold and indifferent; it bounced back my sobbing, sending the sound into the hall and waking others. During my first year at Westtown, I struggled to adjust and spent nights hiding in those stalls, crying. After being reported to the dorm parents, I stopped crying, and anger took its place. Studying abroad was my mother's decision, not mine. At fifteen, I came to Westtown alone.

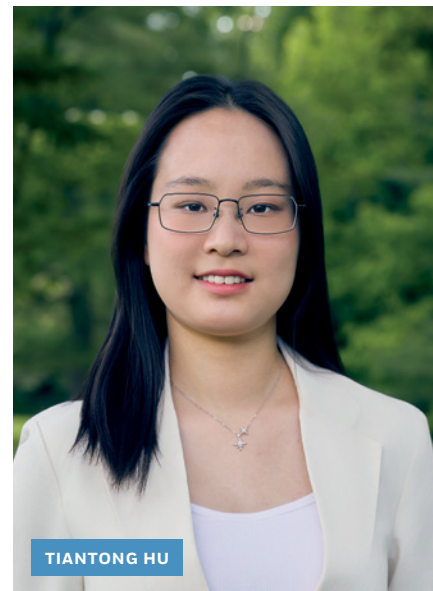
The most difficult part was building connections. Making friends with American students felt impossible; I didn't understand their pop culture, and they didn't know the Chinese literature I loved. During a music guessing game, I couldn't recognize a single song; I could only sit there with my head down, isolated from everyone. I stared at the ground for so long that it's a miracle I didn't become a geologist. But I didn't know then that the real miracle was about to begin.

In the spring, I joined the school musical. I had no idea why I signed up until I stepped onto the stage. The spotlight hit, and suddenly, I realized I was part of the cast, part of the plot. Even without a name or a single line, I was there. I became a single point in the center of that circle of light.

I remembered my goal when I first came to Westtown, which was to experience a different culture and try things I had never tried before. Now, I can say I have finally done it. I stepped far outside my comfort zone for sports I had no experience in but loved anyway, playing two years of JV soccer and running indoor track. I participated in every play and musical I could, and spent my free time teaching English to immigrants and tutoring local children as their big sister, teacher, friend, and mentor. I went to Washington, D.C., to discuss issues I care about with Senators. Believe me, that made my mom very nervous. I served as the editor-in-chief of the literary magazine and the head of the Math Club. These experiences didn't come easily—they were the result of actively embracing uncomfortable challenges.

Here, I have made friends from all over the world with different life stories, including students from China, local American friends, and European exchange students I still keep in touch with. My host family and other local families welcomed me into their homes, sharing meals and traditions even during school breaks. Listening to my friends' stories made me truly understand what infinite possibilities mean.

Bit by bit, I fell in love with Westtown. I love walking in nature and spending time



TIANTONG HU

by the lake. I treasure the walks with friends along the cross-country trails, and my solitary strolls through the woods where I would spot deer, rabbits, woodpeckers, and hawks. These are memories I will never forget. When the sun sets, and the woods grow dark, I sometimes feel afraid, but every moment makes me feel alive in a way I never expected.

Now, Westtown feels like another home. I still carry my identity, my doubts, and my questions, but I have grown into someone who keeps moving forward. My first advisor, Teacher **Emily [Davis]**, encouraged me to continue my interest in literature and gave me a true sense of belonging during my first year; Teacher **Alex [Ates]** opened the world of theater for me, and Teacher **Shawn [Rowley]** inspired me to keep growing on this journey. Beyond supporting my interest in the humanities, my current advisor, Teacher **Lara [Freeman]**, has been an incredibly compassionate soul who stood by my side through every challenge and gave me so much guidance and help.

Recently, I was babysitting a teacher's young daughter. She was running freely around campus and putting stickers on benches. I let her be because I wanted her to feel that Westtown is a place where she

“The spotlight hit, and suddenly, I realized I was part of the cast, part of the plot. Even without a name or a single line, I was there. I became a single point in the center of that circle of light.”

Tiantong Hu

can exist without fear. At that moment, I thought of myself in that bathroom four years ago. The distance between those two versions of me became incredibly clear.

As I prepare to leave Westtown, looking back on these four years, I see how profoundly this place has shaped me. To my fellow students, I want to say that you might sometimes feel uncertain or out of place. However, if you keep moving, stay open, and allow yourself to change, you will eventually find your way. Westtown gave me that chance, and for that, I am deeply grateful. I know that you will all find that chance too.

Additionally, I want to take a moment to mention someone very special today. I was raised by a single mother, but there is another person who is incredibly important to me—my mother’s sister, my aunt. Together, they created a miracle by turning my impossible dreams into reality. Westtown has become the most beautiful part of this miracle for me. Today, my dear aunt is here with us, and I want her to hear these words: Aunt—大姨—thank you for everything. I will love you forever. Thank you.

FERNANDA PAREDES

The best feeling in the world is the warmth of a couch. Not just any couch, THE gray couch. The one you see as soon as you walk into Balderston. The one my



14-year-old self buried into the fuzzy blue pillows, on my very first day at Westtown. I was scared. Who wouldn’t be? Yes, I had chosen to come here, but choosing something doesn’t make it less frightening. This was my first time in Pennsylvania, my first time surrounded by more trees than I could count, my first time hearing a silence broken not by cars but by birds that weren’t the city pigeons I knew from home. Everything around me felt like it came from a movie that I hadn’t seen yet. So I did what made sense: I found a couch, and I stayed on it.

For a while, that couch was my whole world at Westtown. After class, after sports, after dinner, I was always there. Watching Netflix movies I’d already seen. Curled up in the same gray corner cushion, against the familiar warmth of those blue pillows. When everything else was new and uncertain, the couch was the one thing that asked nothing of me. But here’s what I learned: the couch could only give me so much. At some point, I had to get up. And when I finally did, that’s when my Westtown journey actually started.

I put down the sleek black TV remote, picked up a fishing rod and discovered I loved it. I started really talking to people and found that conversations

could take you on so many side quests. I explored this campus, these trails, the lake, the fields, the same beautiful part of Pennsylvania that had once scared me. I was in love with all of it—even the time when a goose chased me.

I loved the Wawa hoagies and runs. The field hockey games. The long talks on the WCR Porch. The dorm sleepovers that lasted until the morning. None of that happened on the couch. It happened because I left it. But I always came back!

That’s what is amazing about a good couch. No matter what happens or where you go, it is always there at the end of the day. It’s where you process life, sit with it, share it with the people who matter. And somewhere along my way, what I brought to that couch changed. I stopped watching Netflix and started writing about my future. Planning goals. Dreaming out loud with friends who have now known me for four years and who knew me before I knew myself. The couch didn’t change. I did. And now I have to leave it. Familiarity is comforting until it’s time to go. Westtown gave me a place that let me be scared, and then let me grow with a smile always welcoming me back.

Before I say my goodbyes, I want to thank my family, especially my mom for letting me move to the middle of nowhere to continue my education. She taught me to be strong, smile through every hurdle, and talk to everyone! Also thank you to

“Familiarity is comforting until it’s time to go. Westtown gave me a place that let me be scared, and then let me grow with a smile always welcoming me back.”

Fernanda Paredes

all my friends, teachers, and mentors for supporting me throughout these four years and my life. Wherever I go next, I'll find my couch. In a new building with new people in a new place that slowly starts to feel like mine. I've always known how to make a place home. Westtown just taught me that I could.

TOM TANG

Three bites on the left; three bites on the right. As far back as I can remember, I have chewed each morsel of food in perfect symmetry, passing it from one cheek to the other, ensuring that both sides received their fair share of mastication. The only explanation I could give was a deep-seated need for equilibrium that eventually became habitual. But, beyond eating, my instinctual thirst for balance has become a guiding principle, directing how I engage with the world and with myself.

My first battles with balance took place on the dance floor. At its core, breakdancing demands stability. My first attempts at a windmill left me collapsed in a heap. The more I danced, the more I found my center. There was no room for favoring left or right; they needed equal attention, as did my mind and body. Any unevenness and I would tumble. Once I understood this, I started defying gravity.

Remaining balanced was more challenging when I moved from China to Pennsylvania. At Westtown School, the entire world seemed tilted. People expressed themselves boldly here, whereas language in China was tactful, indirect, euphemistic. When I tried to decline requests politely, people sometimes misunderstood me, thinking I had agreed. That's how I ended up as the official "fruit fly transporter" in my group in science class—not my dream job! To restore balance, I needed a more assertive speaking style. Clothing was another challenge. To fit in, I had to relinquish my more formal style for T-shirts and sweatpants. But mirroring others sometimes felt like I was trying to be someone else, losing parts of myself, losing my sense of balance.

"Once I was centered, I could attend to the different parts of who I am: a young person discovering his place and purpose in the world, an athlete striving to be stronger and faster, a son maintaining connections with his family, and a scholar constantly investigating new ideas and ways of thinking."

Tom Tang

I came to understand that blending in shouldn't mean erasing my identity. I found ways to keep pieces of home close. I sipped black Chinese tea called Zheng Shan Xiao Zhong alongside my Coke-drinking friends. I called my parents to share my small victories—like the first time I used the phrase "low key" correctly. (I always thought people were saying "Loki," never understanding the Marvel villain's endless relevance.)

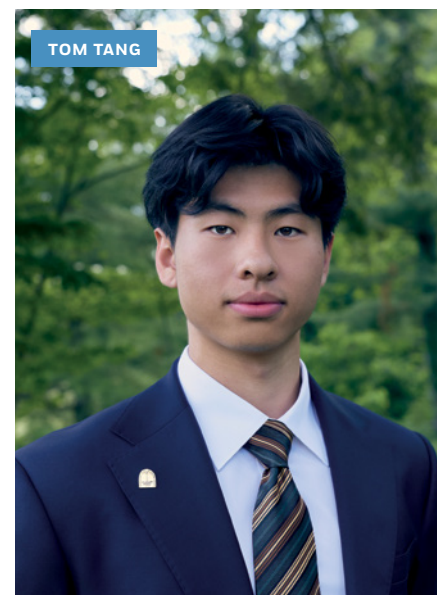
In China, success was measured by academic metrics, first and last. At Westtown, I was expected to develop intellectually, socially, and physically. I quickly found myself on the lacrosse team, a sport I had never even watched. I was so nervous at the first practice that I instinctively dropped my stick and caught the ball with my hand. To juggle my practice schedule, coursework, and a developing social life, I learned to prioritize, take risks, and achieve more elaborate balances.

Living in Pennsylvania, thousands of miles from China, I discovered the most valuable kind of balance is not a fixed state but a process. There were days when homesickness set in, and I felt unsteady. Each time, I returned to the small rituals that helped me reclaim my sense of self. Whether that meant practicing breakdancing, performing a traditional tea ceremony, or listening to Cantonese music, my rituals allowed me to regain my inner peace and harmony. Once I was centered, I could attend to the different parts of who I am: a young person discovering his place and purpose in the world, an

athlete striving to be stronger and faster, a son maintaining connections with his family, and a scholar constantly investigating new ideas and ways of thinking. Balance is possible by sharing things equally between left and right but also by greeting each moment with eagerness to change and rebalance as I grow.

Now, taking three bites on the left and three on the right is a quiet reminder of how I move through the world, seeking balance but embracing whatever comes from each attempt to find it.

In the end, I cannot think of a better way to carry this chapter forward than side by side, still learning, still finding our center. Joey — valedictorian, Student Body President, my best friend — you



taught me everything about life here. And this summer, I'm taking you to China, teaching you everything about my side of the world. No sweatpants. No Diet-Coke. Just black tea and Cantonese music. Good luck. We're even.

VALEDICTORIAN JOEY BURNS

Good morning, friends. I want to begin this address by being honest with you all from the start. Standing here today I am overwhelmed by a range of emotions, and I don't entirely know what to feel right now. But what I can name is this: gratitude, for my classmates trusting me with this moment. Sadness, because this campus has been my home for most of my life, and home is a hard thing to leave. And reflection, as we as a class sit here in the Greenwood reckoning with everything this place has given us, and everything it has asked of us.

When I first entered this campus as a small child ten long years ago, the idea of graduation flickered in the back of my mind like a distant reflection on water, its rippling surface blurring the details of the moment we now find ourselves in. Similarly, at the beginning of this year, I felt the distance between our class and this day. The countdown clock on E2 still showed a couple hundred days, and with those days came comfort for us all. That comfort lay in the fact that despite this being our last year, we still had each other for a little while longer. In the 277 days we had together this year, something special happened. Our class became the truest embodiment of what it means to live in community. And I really don't mean that lightly. I mean I watched 83 people deliberately choose each other over and over again, in small ways and in large ones, all year long. That is not nothing. That, I would argue, is everything. And what I saw in all of it, looking back, was something this school has been pointing us toward for a long time now.

In my ten years at Westtown, no lesson has stayed with me more than this: the

Light is real. For those unfamiliar with Quaker tradition, the Light is the belief that there is something sacred within each of us, a spark of the divine that no circumstance can extinguish. And whether that is a God to you, or simply the belief that each of us has something special within our souls, it is an existing and persistent thing that you can feel breathing throughout this entire campus. You can feel it now in the weathered stone that lines the Greenwood where we all sit today, in the brick walls of the Main Building, and most importantly in each and every person that you encounter here. It is what gives this place life, and what keeps us grounded in the understanding that no matter what, Westtown will always be a place that you can call home.

Centered by this thought, I can't help but think about our time together at the Senior Retreat just this past April. I can recall seniors of past years describing their experiences on this trip as special in a multitude of ways. I remember hearing this at first, and honestly not really believing what they were saying. The idea of shipping our entire class to a retreat center in the middle-of-nowhere Maryland seemed like a recipe for failure more than anything. And look, I also wouldn't say that the drive there was anything inspiring. But something happened when we stepped off the school buses on April 11th. We all bought in. It was as if we signed an invisible contract whose terms consisted of giving our entire presence and being willing to show up for one another in every single moment.

On the retreat we played hacky sack and gaga ball, sang songs, did a polar plunge that wasn't really even that cold, flipped over our kayaks and fell into the river, and sat around a raging fire together. But what sticks with me most from that trip is the night we all sat on the floor of that random building, our faces illuminated by nothing but the faint glow of cheap electronic candles. Something changed in that room that night. It wasn't just any other Meeting for Worship. And this goes



back to the buy in. It was at that moment that we realized our time together was a finite commodity, and with that, we all bought in and shared freely. We shared messages of reflection, stories of the past, hopes for the future, and more than anything else, our love and appreciation for each other.

That room, those candles, those 83 people. That was Westtown working. This school has spent years putting us in proximity with each other, even when our lives look so different, entrusting us to close that distance. Westtown set the table. We showed up. We built something together, something that we didn't understand we were building until we were inside of it. That is community. That is the greatest thing that this place has given us. But community doesn't end here. It goes where you go. And so, I want to leave us here today with three principles to guide us as we run, head first, into the unknown. A new unknown that is for us to discover. One that will be defined by how we decide to interact with the world and those who surround us.

The first principle is this, be an explorer: not just of beautiful places like the one where we sit today, but also of the people who surround you. Here at

“Class of 2026, be explorers. Be kind. Keep learning. And wherever life takes you, remember that you carry the Light. You always have. It is not something Westtown granted you, it was there when you arrived, this place just helped you see it.”

Joey Burns

Westtown, we have learned how to communicate across cultures, languages, and identities in a way that very few people get to experience. So as we move across the world and start the next chapters of our lives, don't be afraid to explore: ask that question you think sounds stupid in your head, try that new food, talk to someone new just for the sake of reaching out. The moments that shaped me most during my time at Westtown were never the ones I planned; they were the ones I haphazardly stumbled into by choosing to stay open and curious.

The next thing I ask of you is this: be kind. Not just to others, but to yourself. And I know this may sound simple, or even cliché. But I have learned over the past few years that our words carry a value greater than what we might understand at a given moment. Recently, I came across a phrase that has stayed with me: be impeccable with your word. And what that means is being intentional about what you say, both to yourself and to others. To be impeccable with your word is to understand that language is not neutral. What we say to others plants something in them, and what we say to ourselves plants something in us. If the Light exists in every person, then the way we speak to ourselves and each other either honors or diminishes it. So be careful with your words. Choose them for yourself the way you would choose them for someone you love. Because you deserve the same care.

And lastly, learn as much as you can. When I was little, every day before school

my dad would recite a saying to me: be a good listener, be a good friend, and learn as much as you possibly can. It was not until recently that I understood the true meaning of what my dad was saying to me. What I know now is that he wasn't just asking me to memorize facts or collect achievements. He was teaching me to live humbly. To walk through the world with the understanding that every person we encounter has something to offer, and all we need to do is listen. Westtown has taught all of us the same lesson in a different way: every lunch table, Community Collection, Meeting for Worship, every moment of genuine connection was its own intrinsic form of education. The world beyond this campus is no different. It is full of people who have something to teach you. You just have to be willing to learn.

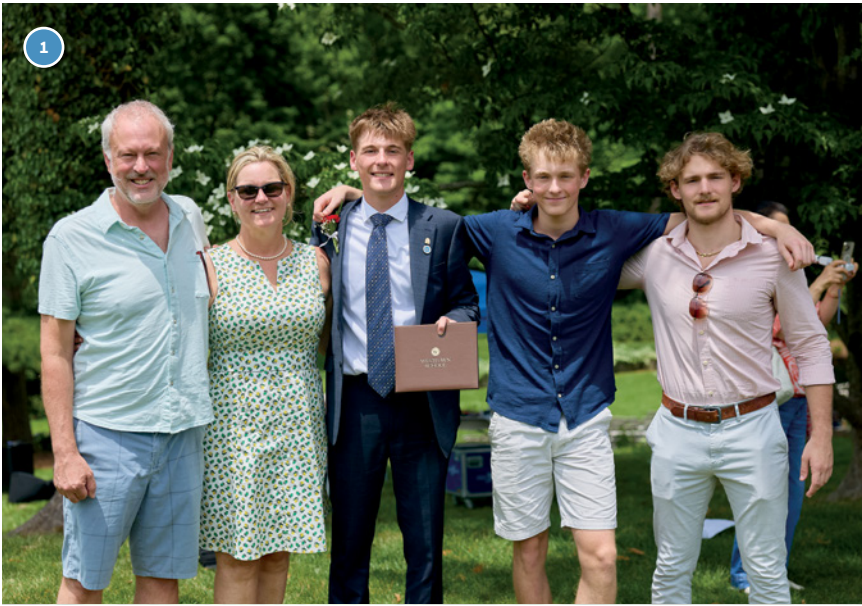
Friends, not long ago, graduation was a distant thing. A ripple on the surface of water, blurry and far away. But now we are here, living and breathing in the moment we have all been picturing since we first stepped foot on this campus. And I have to say, it looks a lot different than what I would've pictured. The Greenwood feels smaller than it did to me ten years ago, and yet it has never felt more full. Full of people I love, full memories I will spend the rest of my life returning to, and full of emotion that I still can't bring myself to describe exactly. And maybe that's okay. Maybe some things are meant to be felt before we can understand them.

I came to this campus as a small child who thought you got to know a place by exploring it: by walking its trails, casting

lines into its lake, finding its quiet corners. And Westtown gave me all of that. But what it gave me, and all of us, more than anything else, what we will carry with us long after we leave campus later today, are the relationships we built here. Every lunch table, late night debate on E2, Meeting for Worship, Belfry hang-out session, every moment someone was brave enough to close the distance between themselves and another person. That is what this place is made of. That is the Light.

So before I go, I want to say thank you. To my family: Mom, Dad, Jesse, Henry, Grandpa, Grandma, Poppy, and Gigi. You are my rock, my guiding light. Thank you for everything you have done, and continue to do for me. To Teacher **Ryan Castaños**, Teacher **Kyle Layne-Allen**, Coach **Jay Farrow**, and every other teacher that I have worked with here at Westtown. I give you my sincerest gratitude. You are what makes and what has made Westtown special, you are the foundation of this community. And last, but certainly not least, to my classmates. There are simply no words big enough. You are the reason this year felt like something worth remembering. And we all should leave today proud of what our class has meant to this place, and what it will continue to mean long after we're gone.

Class of 2026, be explorers. Be kind. Keep learning. And wherever life takes you, remember that you carry the Light. You always have. It is not something Westtown granted you, it was there when you arrived, this place just helped you see it. Alright, friends, it's time for me to go. I have a flight to catch, because I'm going to China with Tom Tang.





All in the Family

(1) Steve Biehn, Jenni Biehn (CF), Asher Biehn '26, Simon Biehn '29, Jeremiah Biehn

(2) Jack Freeman '28, Ted Freeman (CF), Melissa Freeman '26, Jess Smith (FF), Tim Freeman '87

(3) May Savage '22, Betty Savage '26, Paul Savage '79

(4) Aidan Eager '25, Amelia Eager '23, Marpa Eager '86, Susan Pocharski, Callum Eager '26, Nancy Braxton, Mark Pocharski, Sandi Pocharski. Not pictured but attended via Zoom: George Eager '61

(5) Jesse Burns '36, Joe Burns, Joey Burns '26, Henry Burns '28, Anne Burns (CF)

(6) Cari Adams Saenger '97, Bea Saenger '23, Charlie Saenger '26, Margaret Walther Saenger '66,

Chris Saenger '97. Not pictured but in attendance: Susan Johnson MacDonnell '68 and Tristram MacDonnell '03

(7) Ethan McLearn '18, Bruce McLearn, Claire McLearn (CF), Quinlan McLearn '26, Eleanor McLearn, Evelyn McLearn '20, Rob McLearn (BOT)

(8) Erik Kramer '32, Jennifer Dorfman (CF), Shawn Kramer '26, Molly Kramer '29, Marc Kramer

(9) Douglas Waltman '87, Kenneth Waltman '26, Yeoseon Han

(10) Maria Victoria Ocaña Gonzalez, Maria Victoria Bachiller Ocaña, Michael (Miguel) Chang Wenderoth Bachiller '26, Michael Chang Wenderoth '89, Victoria Lan Wenderoth Bachiller '27

Key: CF=Current Faculty, BOT=Board of Trustees, FF=Former Faculty



Back In 'Town

Alums Weekend 2026

BY KELLI PRATER, DIRECTOR OF ALUMS ENGAGEMENT

The sun was shining, smiles were warm, laughter was contagious, and the Westtown spirit was truly palpable throughout Alums Weekend 2026. The festivities began on Friday as students and alums gathered for an Alums Panel discussion moderated by current Trustee and former faculty member **Brennan Barnard '92**. Six alums spanning generations and vocations—**Darrell Mayers '81**, **Claire Murphy '16**, **Harve Nichols '84**, **Sammie Pavlov '16**, **Adam Salo '97**, and **Hannah Shakespeare '83**—shared reflections on their time at Westtown and how those experiences have continued to impact their professional and personal lives. Brennan closed with an open-ended prompt for the panelists and students: “Thank you, Westtown, for giving me...” Their answers offered poignant and meaningful insights.





ALUMS WEEKEND

REUNION

2026

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CLASS OF 1976 Alums Weekend 2026. All left to right, front row: John Waldhausen, Susan Weaver Karper, Amy Parker, Robert Inglis, Leslie Doeblert MacFarlane, Jon Bailey, Muffin Price Dixon, Marina Gresham, Susan Pickard Greenler, Otis Sawyer, Becky Moore Matos. Row 2: Chris Hollingshead, Betsey Copp, Nancy Burlingham Brodsky, Carl Brown, Lynn Sorrell, Alice Trumper Kelsey, John Eiseman, Kim Ott Keck, Margery Burson Schafer, Becky Evans Marvil, Jeannette Raymond, Kate Green, Robert Isen. Row 3: Kurt Fowler, Robert Kressler, Dan Miles, Linda Wallace, Molly Wilson Fairchild, Steve Sawyer, Anastasius Peter, Ellen Cryer Gilbert, Carol Jenkins Blackmore, Nick Heller, Branin Boyd, Bruce Goerlich, Chad Spackman. Back Row: Jeff Culgan, David Barclay, Peter Crawford, Craig Pikaard, Willie Herndon, David Traylor, Jim Burger, Tom Gilbert, Andreas Kronfeld, Arthur Evans, Stuart Brown, Harold Weaver. Not pictured: Tina Adler, David Brown, John Dorchester, Gini Harriman, Bob Nicholson, Jeff Welsh

The positive energy continued into Friday as classes kicked off their individual reunion celebrations, and the Alums Association hosted Graduates of the Last Decade (G.O.L.D.) at Turks Head Tasting Room in West Chester. Warm hugs, old stories, and new connections were celebrated among alums as well as current and former faculty members.

On Saturday, a group of adventurous alums embarked on an early-morning hike

to Elephant Rock, led by current staff member **Deb Wood '86**. Later, the community remembered Westonians who passed away within the past year during a moving and reflective Memorial Meeting for Worship. From the Meeting House, alums traveled down the Granolithic toward the Barton-Test Theater, welcomed by current students into the anchor event of the weekend: the Alums Association Annual Meeting. Serving as the official business meeting for the Alums Association Board, the gathering also offered inspiring updates from campus and beyond. Following a shared moment of silent worship and a resounding rendition of the Alma Mater, Head of School **Chris Benbow '90** gave an update on the state of the school, emphasizing the continued centering of Quaker education, progress on the historic *Lighting the Way* campaign, and an invitation for alums to remain engaged with the community.

Tracy Jackson '83, Clerk of the Alums Association Board, then led the energetic Roll Call of the Decades, recognizing attendees by their reunion years and

honoring faculty and staff members who retired over the past year. Tracy shared key Alums Board initiatives, including the care packages sent to recent alums last fall, the coordination of the weekend's Alums Panel, and ongoing work toward a mentorship program, an alums book club, and the relaunch of the Class Connectors program.

Co-Clerk of the Board **Kavi Gandhi '21** presented the Alums Association Board's Young Alum Changemaker Award—an honor recognizing graduates from the last decade who exemplify Westtown's mission and the Quaker calling to steward a better world—to **Jair Bolden '16**. Jair, currently the Head Video Coordinator and Player Development Coach for the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, has built a life and career that is deeply intertwined with his Westtown roots, where he was a 1,000-point scorer, co-Student Body President, and mentee of Andrew Landes and coach Seth Berger. Following a standout NCAA Division I career at Butler University, Bolden founded the Grey Rose Foundation, a non-profit that combats socioeconomic inequities by providing youth in under-resourced



communities with access to competitive basketball programs, camps, and equipment. By pairing his professional coaching career with a dedication to mentorship, Bolden powerfully translates Westtown's testimonies of stewardship, equality, and community into action. In honor of his impactful leadership, the Alums Association also proudly made a donation to the Grey Rose Foundation.

This year's keynote speaker and current Trustee, **Gary Linnen '96**, shared an inspiring address weaving stories from his youth and time at Westtown with his life of purpose—both personally as a proud father of three and professionally as CEO of PeerForward, a non-profit dedicated to harnessing the power of peer influence to drive positive educational outcomes. Gary's message encouraged belonging and inclusivity, urging the community to show up in everyday life with resiliency, and a commitment to serving others.

The Class of 1976 certainly brought the "Spirit of '76" with the announcement of their 50th Reunion class gift. Proudly presenting on behalf of his classmates, **Craig Pikaard '76** announced gifts totaling over \$617,000, including two newly established endowed funds—the Spirit of '76 Faculty Fund and the Spirit of '76 Financial Aid Fund—as well as more than \$159,000 supporting the Westtown Fund. Westonian generosity was further put on display when **Tracy Jackson '83** presented a unique donation challenge: a group of six generous

alums from the Classes of '52, '63, '70, '75, '80, and '87 stepped forward to match gifts to the Westtown Fund, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$50,000. Alums enthusiastically met this challenge over the following weeks, successfully raising over \$100,000 for the Westtown Fund.

After a moving performance of *Bridge over Troubled Water* by the Westtown Community Choir—a collaboration of current students, faculty, and community members—a homemade lunch awaited. While the 50th Reunion classes and above caught up over a special lunch in the Dining Room, other generations gathered under the tent on the Belfry Lawn to enjoy a scrumptious meal and live music performed by talented student musicians. The sharing of memories continued at the Alum Storytelling Booth in the library, a returning tradition envisioned by **Karl Vela '03**, where alums recorded personal histories to be permanently preserved in the school Archives.

On Saturday afternoon, the campus was transformed into a "choose your own adventure" experience. Led by current faculty and students, eleven Explore Westtown Sessions were offered, allowing attendees to explore current campus life, such as the hidden tunnels and mechanics of the Main Building, witness hydroponics in action inside a current classroom and the Greenhouse, or reconnect through the Foundations of Quakerism session. Meanwhile, athletically inclined alums

chose to lace up their cleats and take to the Oak Lane Turf Fields for the traditional field hockey and soccer games, much to the delight of a lively, cheering crowd.

Westtown's Equity, Justice, and Belonging team hosted its second annual Belonging is Sweet reception, a gathering of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ alums. During the reception, **Mary Oliver Brown '70**, Westtown's first Black valedictorian, shared her story. She reflected on her groundbreaking years at Westtown, the challenges she navigated as one of the school's few Black students at the time, and the lasting imprint those years left on her heart and her career as an accomplished writer and poet. In one of the weekend's most moving moments, she offered a reading from her poetry book, sharing words that were both deeply personal and universally resonant.

A full and fun afternoon was capped off with iconic Westtown mainstays: canoeing on the Lake, children's activities, including projects hosted by current art faculty, and visits to the pop-up School Store. Celebrations stretched long into the evening as classes gathered for their respective dinners, including the Class of 1976, who held their 50th reunion dinner at the Center for the Living Arts (CLA) surrounded by an impressive exhibition of their classmates' own artwork.

The weekend concluded beautifully on Sunday morning. Alums fueled up and shared parting embraces during a delicious Farewell Breakfast before gathering with Westtown Monthly Meeting for a lovely and grounding Meeting for Worship—the perfect culmination to a Westtown weekend.

Whether you attended in person, joined us virtually, or volunteered your time—our volunteers included over 55 students and 45 faculty and staff members—we hope you felt deeply connected and cared for. We look forward to welcoming you for the next Alums Weekend, May 14–16, 2027!

Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled by the Advancement Office.
The submission deadline for this issue was July 1, 2026; information received after that date will appear in the next issue of *The Westonian*.

1951 **Marcia Saulo '78** writes, "My brother **Russ Norment**, Class of 1983, and I are sad to report that our mother **Rachel Gobbel Norment**, Class of 1951, died on Monday, June 8, at age 92, after an extended health decline. After becoming widowed, Rachel spent the last nine years of her life in Florida in independent living communities close to her daughter. She enjoyed teaching watercolor classes, facilitating dream work groups, learning new crocheting patterns, making new acquaintances

across political divides, and sharing amusing animal videos with her friends.

1957 **Peter Lane '57** writes, "I'm hoping that the 'Class Connector' will, indeed, be brought back. I did that for our class and really hope to get back to it. Thanks."

1961 Following the publication of her first novel, *The Mayflower Marriage*, in 2020, **Arminal Dare-Bryan '61** continued writing and published her second novel, *What Price Freedom*, in January 2026.

Continuing to marry her interest in American history with her love of literary fiction, *What Price Freedom* is a sweeping historical narrative that explores freedom in its many forms — personal, political, and moral — while addressing themes that continue to resonate in today's world.

The story follows Samuel Bass, a husband and father who leaves his family to fight for the newly formed Continental Army under General George Washington. After being



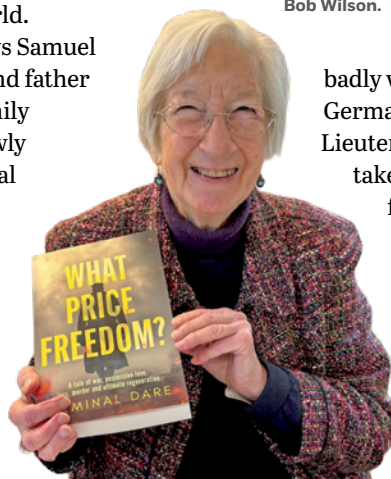
Class of 1956. From left to right: Beth Kaiser, Mel Kaiser, Jim Perkins, Mary Ellen Trueblood, Sam Trueblood, Charlie Chase, Betty Chase.



Class of 1961. Front row (left to right): Ginny Brendlen, Jo Bewley, Nancy Van Warmer; Second row: Jan Jones, Becky Test; Third row: Margie Waite, Jim Littrell, Bob Woodward; Fourth row: Eric Hofer, Carol Press, Tom Kaesemeyer, Ouida Parker, Carol Gelbach; Top row: Dane Criddle, Bill Goulding, Laurie Worth, Bob Wilson.

badly wounded at the Battle of Germantown, Samuel is rescued by Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens and taken to recover with a Quaker family in Philadelphia. During his convalescence, he falls in love with the young enslaved woman assigned to care for

him, setting in motion a deeply conflicted and dangerous journey that challenges his loyalties, beliefs, and sense of justice. Through Samuel's story, Arminal examines the contradictions at the heart of a nation fighting for liberty while maintaining systems of enslavement, and charts one man's growing determination



Arminal Dave-Bryan '61 at the launch of *What Price Freedom*



Class of 1966*

to fight for equal education and opportunity for all, regardless of color.

Arminal says: “I wanted to explore what freedom truly means when love, duty, and morality collide. Although the story is set in the 18th century, the themes of power, prejudice, and the cost of standing up for what is right still feel uncomfortably relevant today.”

The book is available to buy from Amazon in paperback or ebook.

Class of 1961 Reunion recap: After 65 years, from the Bay of Pigs and Viet Nam to Ukraine and Iran, from Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy to the present, from a phone attached to a wall to cell phones and Zoom, 35 out of the 93 members of the class of 1961 participated in person or electronically on Alums Day 2026. We shared moments of awe as we looked upon faces we had not seen in decades. It was truly profound. We listened, we laughed, we cried, we dined together, we remembered, we told our stories. We rejoiced with those who were able to be present, and for the 26 who had passed, we spoke their names out loud and paused. We gathered at



Class of 1971. Front row (left to right): Lylie Brown Allison, Teri Reath D'Ignazio, Edna Neal Collins, Bob McKinstry, David Stonestrom, Christopher Knowles. Middle Row: Robert Cope, Christopher Manning, Sylvia Bronner, Catherine Moon Stalberg, Steve Prentice, Peter Doo, Eric Shultz, Richard Tiffany. Top Row: John Gerbron, Steve Tuttle, Howard Frysinger, Andrew Robinson, Jon VonOhlsen

the Worth family farm, established in 1818, for dinner on Friday night for the beginning of our weekend. Alum[s] Day was followed by the morning meeting, lunch, and more quality time together. Our final formal gathering was dinner at Crosslands in a beautiful historic home, where conversations and connections deepened. How did this happen? It happened in part because of an institution named Westtown School, founded

in 1799, that nurtures Quaker values. It happened because dedicated individuals like **Laurie Russell Worth**, **Becky Test**, and **Robert Woodward** worked hard to pull it all together. It happened because individuals intuitively felt a tug to leave their homes and families, for perhaps the last time, to reconnect with classmates with whom they sang, swam, caused mischief, studied, and dated. It happened because of invisible

IN MEMORIAM

Jean Dithridge Wohlsen '33

Virginia Freeman Wearn '45

Mary Harnwell Wallace '47

Rachel Gobbel Norment '51

Marsden Williams '52

Frances Woods Fairchild '53

Stephen Payson '53

Margaret Beeghley
Hartzell '54

Thomas Stratton '58

Robert Houghton '59

Charles White '62

Elizabeth Brett '65

James Doehlert '69

Christopher Fowler '73

Christopher Johnston '73

Byron Caughey '75

Mary Siceloff '76

Matthew Western '76

Arturo Bagley '83

Julie Keene '85

Hilary Spears '01

Tyler McNeil '04

FORMER FACULTY/STAFF

Ridge Satterthwaite

Michael Buchanan



Class of 1981. Front Row (left to right): Joy Johnson Momon, Kathy Suskevich, Eric Fischer, Mary Hurd Harpster, Jim Fairchild. 2nd Row: Germaine Carter McKenna, Amanda Richards Jones, Tina Hoffman Warnick, Lynn Gardiner Spaulding. 3rd Row: Kris Boe Batley, Lisa Shapiro Boehm, Tom Hodges, Samantha Atkinson Morris, Andrea Seidler Goryl, Ed Rhoads. Back Row: Darrell Mayers, Bob Batley, Bruce Harrison, Will Hildreth, Carter Bonsall, Taun Chapman. Not Pictured: Lois Roe



Class of 1986*

ties that bound young people together with something significant from long ago: a sense of belonging and shared experience. Simply a time of wonder and awe. —Submitted by **Nancy Stratton Van Wormer '61**

1973 **Larry Moulton '73** writes, "For the year 2025, **David Robbins Tien '73** attained the United States Tennis Association #1 ranking for Men's Singles 70+ tennis. As far as I know, this is the first time any Westonian has been ranked top in the country in any sport. He achieved this by winning two national tournaments and being runner-up in two others. And,

in February 2026, he won the British Masters Open Indoor Championship 70+. He may be the first old guy to hold both the U.S. and British indoor titles at the same time. In addition, in 2025, he was part of the four-person British team that took home the bronze medal at the ITF World Tennis Masters Tour team championships (men's 70s team), victorious against France in the third-place playoff."

1976 **Class of 1976 Reunion recap:** Alum[s]
Weekend 2026, the Class of 1976 (see page 46 for photo!) returned to campus to celebrate a milestone that once

seemed impossibly far away: our 50th high school reunion. With “The Spirit of ’76” as our theme, 54 classmates and 19 guests came together for a weekend filled with friendship, creativity, memory, gratitude, and the unmistakable feeling of coming home.

Our reunion began Friday evening at the home of **Ellen** and **Tom Gilbert**, where more than 60 classmates and guests gathered for a catered meal and an easy return to old connections. It was wonderful to hear about the diverse and often extraordinary life experiences of our classmates over the past five decades. The class of ’76 has made its mark on the world!

At the annual meeting of the Westtown Alums Association, **Craig Pikaard** presented our 50th Reunion gift to the school, made up of two endowed funds—the Spirit of ’76 Faculty Fund (\$188,895), the Spirit of ’76 Financial Aid Fund (\$269,693)—and \$159,119 to the Westtown Fund and other gifts for a grand total of \$617,707! Grateful thanks to all the classmates who helped us exceed our fundraising goal!

Lunch in the Dining Room really brought back memories (though not of Liver Night, fortunately) and provided another opportunity for us to catch up and reconnect.

The highlight of our 50th Reunion was the Creative Works show, organized and implemented by **John Eiseman** with help from Amy Grebe, Chair of the Visual and Performing Arts Department. The multifaceted artwork of 13 talented members of our class — painters, photographers, weavers, writers, and others — was beautifully displayed in the newly renovated Center for the Living Arts. The show was a joyful testament to the creativity, imagination, and energy of the Class of 1976.

Sunday morning, we gathered in the Cabin for Meeting for Worship. We had opted to meet as a class rather than in the Meeting House with the whole school. In the stillness, we relived old memories, gave thanks for the bonds that have endured, and remembered with love the classmates who have



Class of 1991*



Class of 1996*

passed away since our graduation. We left the weekend grateful for the chance to be together again, carrying with us renewed affection for one another and for the school that helped shape us.

Many thanks to the Reunion Committee: **Molly Wilson Fairchild, Ellen Cryer Gilbert, Tom Gilbert, Kate Green, Susan Weaver Karper, Kim Ott Keck, Becky Evans Marvil, Bob Nicholson, Craig Pikaard, and Steve Sawyer.**—Submitted by Susan Karper.

1978 **Marcia Saulo '78** writes, “I am happy to report that my husband Paul and I now live in Naples, Florida, as I recently accepted the position of Finance Director for the City of Marco Island, after spending six years as Comptroller for the City of Jacksonville.”

1987 **Peter Chelkowski '87** produced and directed the film *One with the Whale*, which received a Peabody Award and an Emmy nomination in 2025 for its heartwarming,



Westonian guests at the wedding of Karl Vela '03 and Sarah Evans '03 (from left to right): Odysseus Chairetakis '03, Rob Evans '02, Trish Cope '73, Tucker O'Donnell '03, Jamie Collins '03, Hannah Holby '03, Tristram MacDonnell '03, Karl Vela '03, Sarah Evans '03, Scott Broussard '03, Ronald Gomez '03, Rev. Tim Shepherd '03, Goodhue Danser '03, Justin Dannecker '03, Chris Beesley '02, Victor Garcia '03, Becky Marvil '76, Nate Evans '00, Anna Evans Beesley '68, Bruce Evans '75, Art Evans '76, and Tim Evans '66.



Peter Chelkowski '87 and Tracker, Pedro Bay, Alaska



Pictured left to right from the Class of 1989: Nate Robb (NYC), Nathan Derr (Towson, MD), Randy Lewis (Philadelphia, PA), Ross Browne (Phoenix, AZ), Chris Wilkes (Washington, DC), Ferd Zogbaum (Tampa, FL) and Chris Stein (Columbus, OH).

yet thrilling tale of an Alaska Native family's struggle to recover from animal activists' online assaults against their teenage son, the youngest person to ever harpoon a whale for his village.

1989 **Elise Allen '89** writes, "Last week **Allison Kinsey '89** and I went to see fellow Westtown alum **Livingston Taylor '69** in concert! Neither of us had seen him since he did an assembly at Westtown when we were in middle school, and we loved seeing him again. Not only did he

give an incredible show, he even shouted out Westtown in his set! Totally recommend his performances to anyone; they're a great time, and we'll absolutely go back for more."

Chris Wilkes '89 writes, "Seven members from the class of 1989 gathered at **Nathan Derr's** home in Towson, Maryland, this past June for a fun-filled weekend of reminiscing about our time at Westtown, catching an Orioles baseball game, and reconnecting over the experiences that brought us all together 37 years ago. We were also excited to reconnect with fellow classmate, **Mike King** (Baltimore), which was fantastic!"

2003 Westonians gathered along with friends and family to celebrate the wedding of **Karl Vela '03** and **Sarah Evans '03** (pictured above).

2006 **Read Connolly '06** writes, "A long way from West Chester! Two Westonians were on a large music tour in Europe this summer. Read Connolly '06 plays steel guitar and banjo for Zach Bryan, and **Michael Haldeman '10** plays guitar for Dijon. Their tour spanned the UK and Ireland, playing for crowds as big as 50,000 people."



Allison Kinsey '89, Elise Allen '89, and Livingston Taylor '69 backstage at the show!



Class of 2001. Front row (left to right): Kara Gillam, Frances Darnell, Felicia Potter, Carrie Dudas, Kelly Collins, Geoff Robinson, Ward Knob, Laura Murphy Favela, Alex Ferrier McIntosh, Matthew Davis. Middle row: Emily O'Donnell Ziemba, Leah Arnett McVay, Leslie Henriquez, Kristy Embrack Searles, Siri Om Stone Fuller, Casey Snedecor, Ani Taylor, Matt Collins, Ben Cooper, Andrew Alburn. Back row: Henry Salmon, Parker Thoeni, Katina Ferguson-Bays, Alston Lambert, Carrie Levy Cupp, Elizabeth Clark, Kate Farquhar, Katrina Nelson, Sam Thomson Jordan, Jamal Richards, Jake Greenblum



Read Connolly '06 and Michael Haldeman '10 in Belfast, Northern Ireland



Class of 2006. Back row (left to right): Zach Bull, Jonathan Starr, Louis Porter, Luke McKinstry, Sachin Gadani, Johnnie Martin, Gabe Holt, Dylan Tuttle, Phil Ligon, (gap), Henry Catania, Antone Konst, Paul Richards, Max Lewis. Middle row: Chris Sheldon, Julie Collins, Dana Reinert, Emily Barnett Linhares, Maggie Gilligan, Eva Herzog, Katy Githens, Chelsea Kerwin, Kjell Strode, Geddes Dowling, Winston Hibberd, Stephen Turner, Read Connolly, Rocco Arena, Isabel Mise, Laura Cox, Jonathan Merrill, Emily Ferris, Catherine Fuller. Front row: Amy Markstein, Hannah Gold, Chloe Lubell, Porsche Jackson, Eudora Linde, Ashlee Adams, Dorothy Hanrahan, Hillary Clarke, Meghan Roche Palmer, Natalie Lindop-Braun, Malaika Spencer, Heidi Richter, Gabriele Betancourt-Martinez, Keith Miller



Class of 2011*

2008 **Korwin Briggs '08** and Robyn Smith were married on Valentine's Day, near (but not next to) the pictured fifteen-foot-tall poodle. Several other Westtown alums attended, including the best man, **Robbie Bean '08**, and the worst man, **Stephen Wortman '08**. Toward the end of the night, a smoke alarm interrupted the eight-song Weird Al medley, and everyone had to evacuate. It was ok though—the DJ played Chappell Roan's *Hot to Go* on a portable boom box, and the couple got a photo with a fireman.

CLASS NOTES



Class of 2016*

2024 In April, the Athletic Department and the Westtown community celebrated the life of **Noah Snyder '24**, who was tragically killed earlier this year. Noah was an amazing community member who was always smiling and giving a helping hand. Noah was also a standout athlete who was a captain and FSL All League player who led the boys varsity lacrosse team to its first ever FSL and PAISAA State Championships.

There was a brief ceremony on Holloway Field before the boys lacrosse game to honor Noah and to retire his jersey.

FORMER FACULTY

Ridgway "Ridge" Satterthwaite, a former faculty member from 1960 to 1963 has passed away after a sudden illness at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital at age 89. Ridge had **C. Thomas Kaesmayer '61** among his students. Ridge met and married his ex-wife, Ellen Hagenau Satterthwaite, at Westtown, and his two sons were born while they were living in Stone House. His eldest son, **Roger Satterthwaite**, was Westtown class of 1979.

Michael "Mike" Buchanan, a former faculty member (1955–1962) and coach at Westtown School, passed away on April 8, 2026, in Keene Valley, New York, at the age of 95. Mike taught at Westtown near



Korwin Briggs '08 with wife, Robyn Smith, and "Fifi," the poodle. Photo by Matt Schmachtenberg Photography



The family of Noah Snyder '24 at his jersey retirement ceremony

the beginning of his career. While he did not remain at Westtown for his career, the school was an important experience and place with a deep impact on his life. He met Phyllis Ruth Buchanan, his wife and former head of the Middle School at Westtown, 1983-2000, here, as well as lifelong friends (and former faculty) John and Heather Moir. He and his family lived at 1536 Johnny's Way until moving to Keene Valley in 2000. In fact, he and Phyllis bought their home on Johnny's Way from the mother of **Ted Lehmann '59**, another Westtown graduate.

There's more (lots more), but his time at Westtown as a place and experience that had a profound influence on his life is true for so many who have attended or taught at the school.

After Westtown, Mike devoted nearly three decades to Wilmington Friends

School (1966–1993), where he taught mathematics and physical education, served as Head of the Mathematics Department, and coached basketball, soccer, and, most notably, tennis. Students there remember him as 'Mr. B' and his wife Phyllis—who taught social studies at Wilmington, 1975-1982—as 'Mrs. B.' He loved teaching and was known for his deep care for students as well as his steady presence in the classroom and on the field or tennis court. Mike's 'summer' job was as general manager and tennis pro at the Keene Valley Country Club.

Born in Kensington South, London, Mike spent his early years between London, where his father held a seat on the London Stock Exchange, and the family's second home in Northern Ireland. After his father's death, Mike came to the United States at age eight

in August of 1939. With the outbreak of World War II that September, Mike remained with his aunt in New Haven and never returned to the United Kingdom. During his early adulthood, he served as a paratrooper, though his principled stance against harming others nearly led to a court-martial. In 1994, Mike became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Mike carried his values into every aspect of his life, particularly in his work with young people. Reflecting in later years, he shared, "At 91+ years, I still miss those wonderful children I had the honor of knowing and teaching!!!"

His wife, Phyllis Buchanan, predeceased him in 2019. Mike is survived by his sons, **James Buchanan '84** and Terry Buchanan ('85, Wilmington Friends School), and his grandchildren, Emma, Andrew, Violet, and Quincy. —Submitted by James Buchanan '84.

CLASS NOTES



ASIA FRIENDS OF WESTTOWN RECEPTIONS 2026

Cathy Kane '69, Eric Zhao '11, and Christine Hao '21 attended the Friends of Westtown in Beijing. **Elle Ding '09**, who was also in attendance, partnered with the Westtown team on their trip to Asia, providing support with trip preparations and translating during the reception.

Chris DeMarino '87, Hugo Chang '10, and Shuangcheng Du '14 attended the reception in Shanghai.

Iris Dong '13 attended the FOW in Shenzhen.

Kwan Choe '66, Sunny Moon '08, and Dennis Hong '11 attended the Friends of Westtown in Seoul.

Thank you to all who attended these wonderful gatherings and who helped make them a success.



Asia Friends of Westtown receptions, top to bottom: Group photo from Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Shenzhen

1926

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Since 1926, the Greenwood has been a space for celebration and community. Its earliest use was for a student performance on Alumni Day, which morphed into a long-running tradition of annual Shakespeare plays. The first, performed in 1927, was *The Merchant of Venice*, in front of an estimated crowd of 1,200 students, staff, alums, and their families. In 1945, it became the site of commencement ceremonies. Today it is also for opening assemblies at the beginning of every school year. It is a place that honors the natural world while providing a space for gathering and reflection, and will continue to be a beloved part of Westtown's campus for generations to come.



STROHMEYER



ALUMS *Weekend*

MAY 14-16, 2027

SEE YOU BACK IN 'TOWN

All are welcome as we celebrate
classes ending in 2s and 7s.

REGISTRATION OPENS
FEBRUARY 2027!

CONVERSATIONS FROM THE FACING BENCH

Join us for candid virtual dialogues with alums
across diverse fields as we examine how a Westtown
foundation inspires a life of deep purpose.

Ohemaa Nyanin '05

Sports Leadership
October 2026 (date TBD)

Kevin Roose '05

Journalism & Tech: December 8, 2026

For more information, follow  @westtown_alums

