

A PUBLICATION OF MARSHALL SCHOOL

THE HILLTOPPER



MEET THE MOMENT

SPRING 2021

FROM THE EDITOR



Lately, I have been thinking about the ship of Theseus; less about the mythical ship than about the analogy it offers to consider the philosophical problem of identity. A simplified version of the thought question is this: If rotting boards are replaced on a wooden ship, at which point does the original ship become a different ship? This question has kept philosophers busy for centuries, and it has been keeping me busy since watching the series finale of WandaVision on Disney+ (don't worry; no spoilers ahead!). In the context of a school community, how can we make necessary changes while keeping the essence of who we are?

As Hilltoppers start their educational journey, each class learns and grows and leaves as new graduates. The students who form the school community are continually learning and growing and leaving to be replaced by the next year's students. In many ways, we are more comfortable with constant change than we often believe we are. That became apparent through the swift and sudden upheaval during this last March: It was too much too quickly for too long. And yet, we continued on as a community, held together by the goal of providing excellent educational opportunities for our students.

These pages contain many examples of that tenacity to keep on, to keep our identity, even as we traded out in-person classroom time for video meetings and Topper Tunnels through crowded hallways

for different ways of celebrating student success. That is one of the beautiful things about Marshall: Challenges are met by attitudes of opportunity, a willingness to learn, and a willingness to say, "I don't know, but let's figure it out together."

Even as we prepare to say farewell to Kevin Breen as our Head of School at the end of this academic year, I imagine he would say that he has just been one plank of this ship, and we will sail on well without him. While he would be right, it is worth remembering that it is no small thing to be part of a school in such an integral way for eight years. We are prepared to sail on well, and we are thankful for Kevin's dedication to making it so.

Speaking of changes big and small: If you opened this Hilltopper Magazine expecting to see Kevin's letter right here, you can find his longer reflections on page five. It only seemed fitting to give him more space to share one more time as a Marshall Hilltopper in Duluth, MN before he begins his journey as a Worcester Hilltopper in Worcester, MA. With all the changes ahead for Kevin, at least he will be able to keep cheering, "Go 'Toppers!"

Holly Mirau

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The Hilltopper is published for alumni, current and past parents, grandparents, and friends of Marshall School and Duluth Cathedral High School.

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SNAPSHOTS

1

The annual Poetry Out Loud contest went online and was a voluntary extracurricular instead of a classroom activity for the 2020-2021 school year, but that didn't stop seniors **Ella Grim** and **Matthew Scribner** from earning a spot at the state competition as well as the first Topper Tunnel of 2021!



2

Nordic skiers and team captains **Lucy Campbell '21** and **Declan Hutchinson '21** represented Marshall at the state races in March for the second year running.



Welcome Grandparents and Grandfriends



3

Grandparents' and Grandfriends' Day was a multimedia virtual experience this year instead of an in-person event. We missed having some of our favorite guests on campus the morning before Thanksgiving break, but we are thankful we had the opportunity to share what a typical day in this atypical year looked like!



4

In a non-pandemic year, seventh-graders spend several educational and fun (and usually snowy!) days at Camp Widjiwagen in February. To make sure this class was still able to enjoy the outdoor fun and team-building activities, faculty hosted "Widji Days" complete with events including but not limited to: orienteering, outdoor survival skills, poetry and art, and an eco hike on the Superior Hiking Trail.

5

Speaking of the pandemic, this year has included many events-gone-virtual like Convocations, weekly assemblies, the middle school Clue game, and Topper Tunnels. Thanks to the creativity of Marshall's faculty and students, there have been ways to continue safely celebrating Hilltopper achievements and activities!



INTRODUCING JAMIE STECKART

We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Mr. James (Jamie) Steckart** as our incoming Head of School beginning the 2021-2022 school year. Jamie brings decades of experience as an educator both here in the midwest and around the globe, and he is excited to join us in providing an exceptional Marshall experience for families in the Twin Ports.

After eight years as Head of School at Marshall, Kevin Breen is heading back east to be closer to family and to step into a new role as Head of School at Worcester Academy in Worcester, MA.

Keep an eye out for a longer introduction in the Fall 2021 Hilltopper Magazine!

NEW TRUSTEES



KRISTINA FRYBERGER D'ALLAIRD '86

Kristina Fryberger D'Allaird '86 has spent her professional career in higher education. She earned a B.S. in Hotel Management at Oregon State University and an M.S. in Higher and Post-Secondary Education at Syracuse University. She worked at various colleges and universities as a Greek Advisor and Director of Student Activities and Student Centers. She worked for Capella University in Minneapolis

prior to her current position as Assistant to the Athletic Director at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Kristina previously served on the Marshall Board of Trustees from 2003-2012. She has co-chaired the Marshall Auction Committee and has served on several alumni committees. She has also served on the board of Congdon Youth Hockey and Duluth Amateur Hockey Association. Kristina and her husband **Dan** have a current Hilltopper, **Tucker '22**, and a Hilltopper graduate, **Alexandra '20**. She feels fortunate their children attend/ed Marshall. It is a place they felt safe, supported, and comfortable taking risks. She loves being back in Duluth and ensuring Marshall is a place for everyone.



DR. ANDREA SCHOKKER

Dr. Andrea Schokker currently serves as Professor and Head of Civil Engineering at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. She teaches structural engineering design courses including a course on the History of Structures that introduces students from any major to structures of significance worldwide and their interaction with society and the economy. Andrea received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin focusing on structural engineering. She completed her M.S. and B.S. in Civil Engineering at Washington

University in St. Louis. She spent 9 years at Penn State University as a faculty member before moving to the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 2008 to start the Civil Engineering Program. She served as founding chair and then served as the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs from 2012-2016. She has been honored with awards for teaching, advising and leading initiatives for women in STEM fields. Andrea has been involved with training and showing dogs for over 25 years. She and her husband, **Steve Graham**, own Canal Bark, a local pet services business. Their son **Aidan** is a 10th grader at Marshall School who can also be found helping with dogs at Canal Bark or with his mom at a dog show in non-pandemic times.

MEET THE MOMENT

BY KEVIN BREEN

THE WORK OF A SCHOOL IS DETERMINED BY THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY. FRANCIS PARKER

Earlier this year, I attended a conference for school leaders and encountered this Francis Parker quote during the keynote address. Since then, when I ponder my impending departure or try to make sense of this pandemic school year, the quotation gives shape to my reflections. This year, despite the inherent risks, Marshall did the work society needed it to do. We masked up, we showed up, and we “met the moment.”

That phrase, too, is borrowed from the keynote speaker, Ian Symmonds, whose address was entitled, “From Meeting the Moment to Meeting the Future.” And as long as I am borrowing freely, I will share one other quotation from his presentation. A Peter Drucker quote that I have heard a handful of other times since Marshall School made the decision to close campus and pivot to online learning last March: “The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself but to act with yesterday’s logic.” Save that thought for now, as I will talk about Marshall’s future later in this essay.



Meeting the needs of society is something our school has done well for over a century, and it is time that we give the institution its due. When Duluth Cathedral High School primarily served working-class families, tuition costs were kept especially low to meet the needs of society. Through the years downtown as well as the 50+ here on the Hilltop, through wars and tragedy both local and national, Marshall School endorsed a mission centered on compassion to meet the needs of society. And when the COVID-19 coronavirus forced families to quarantine, Marshall School accepted the burden of reinventing itself to meet the needs of society.

That is why I love this school so much. While some alumni bemoan that the school has changed since they walked these halls, I love it because it does change, because it does meet the moment. When Holly Mirau offered me the

opportunity to write 1,000 words on any topic for this issue of the Hilltopper, my last as Marshall's Head of School, I knew exactly how I wanted to use this space. I want to make a case for Marshall/Cathedral; I want to ask friends and alumni to recognize the school's vast contribution to this community, and to move us all beyond passive appreciation. What we went through last spring and summer in preparation for the upcoming school year is a recent example of why I see the work here at Marshall as deserving of more than a hearty pat on the back.

On a Friday in July, in the midst of tremendous uncertainty, I wrote to the teachers to inform them I was reducing many full-time teachers to part-time. At that moment, the local economy looked bleak, and several large employers were reducing their workforces. We knew our families would experience job loss and be unable

to pay tuition, and we were told to expect a second round of attrition impacting as many as 15% of the families who remained with us. The following week, we met with the faculty via Zoom, and the call was excruciating. The lost revenue was impactful to our teachers in real-life ways. Teachers with kids at Marshall would have to pull them from school, and teachers with two jobs would have to take a third.

Despite the challenges my decision presented, a few weeks later, when we determined that we would open school four days early and welcome students back for in-person instruction, Marshall's teachers met the moment. They were all in, and because of that, momentum swung in our favor.

When the news began to spread that our teachers were willing to provide in-person instruction, dozens of new families started the application process. Suddenly,

we thought we might meet our enrollment goal, so we began the process of reinstating the teachers to full-time. Eventually, we surpassed our goal and had to cap enrollment. And all of this was happening because we were meeting the needs of society.

Even with that late enrollment surge, we would not have been positioned to restore teachers to full-time had it not been for the generosity and vision of one Marshall family to lead the way. In December of 2019, believing that Marshall was providing a rich education for their children, the Annala family wanted us to reach more broadly into all corners of the Twin Ports, to make Marshall more affordable for families, and to make the experience of those students more successful throughout their time at Marshall. Inspired by their vision, others soon stepped forward to support the Community Fund through our Fund-a-Need and together we raised over \$130,000.

Weeks later, in the early months of economic distress, the Community Fund became our ace-in-the-hole. After discussion with all the lead donors, we made some of the funding available to families who encountered job loss or serious illness and were able to retain approximately fifteen families. If the work of a school is determined by the needs of society, it is our loyal friends who fuel our ability to meet those needs. In participating in the virtual auction, and designating contributions to the Community Fund, dozens of our friends "paid it forward," allowing us to meet the moment for those families.

As for tackling turbulent times with yesterday's logic, you needn't worry. In addition to risking their health to teach in person, our teachers have also learned how to deliver content online and in a hybrid fashion, and our administrative team has

I MARVEL AT OUR SCHOOL'S ABILITY TO ADAPT TO SOCIETY'S NEEDS.

worked nearly every day since the shutdown to meet both the moment and the future. As it turns out, disruption is a catalyst for creativity and innovation. We will take with us the best of those innovative ideas, and leave some other pandemic-specific strategies behind. As I said above, some may bemoan the ways in which we have changed as a school, but I marvel at our school's ability to adapt to society's needs.

At the same time, I recognize the sacrifices our team has made this year, worry about the fatigue we feel, hope they will return to a more sustainable model next fall, and seek ways to "move beyond thanks" in recognition of their contributions.

I will move on from Marshall knowing the school is poised and ready for the future. Our next leader will not bring yesterday's logic to the school's next set of challenges and opportunities.

Together with a faculty that always meets the moment, they will meet the future. With that in mind, I will move on from here fully confident that Marshall will always meet the evolving needs of society. That said, I will also move on hoping this great school is finally earning the respect it deserves. It is a pillar of the community having served some 6,000 alumni for more than a century.

One of the many ways a school community can "move beyond thanks" and become more supportive is through giving. If you agree that our teachers did something extraordinary this year, consider a gift to the Marlene David Fund, which supplements faculty salaries. If the vision of the Annala family inspires you and you would like to see Marshall make a difference in all corners of the Twin Ports, consider a gift to the Community Fund. If you were touched by the guidance of Karen Snyder, Lori Durant, or any of our other instructors—such as Tom Diener and Terry Schoer whose service to the school spans more than thirty years—then help us make our expanded outdoor education space a reality and support Snyder-Durant Park. And if you see the value in supporting this excellent independent school for being the beacon on the hill we strive to be, consider supporting the Annual Fund that helps fuel the fire of the student experience here.

When you support the school in the way that appeals to you, you will be moving beyond thank you—and that will feel really good to us in a year such as this—a time when our little school has once again met the needs of society. [M](#)

Seniors **Zach Ye** and **Mady Friese** perform together at a distance during the Winter Frolic pep rally.

CHANGES

CHANGES

BY TONY LOCKHART

Senior **Zach Ye** stood on the stage of the Fregeau Auditorium ready to be a part of a beloved Hilltopper tradition - Winter Frolic. But like everything in this pandemic-affected year, it would be different. He and his partner, **Mady Friese '21**, would compete in the Karaoke Contest on opposite sides of the stage. Instead of a crowded lunchroom, only the seniors—masked and sitting at least three seats and two rows apart—would watch live. This final event in the weeklong competition would be live-streamed for the upper school students gathered in individual classrooms with their small advisory groups. “It was different,” Zach recalled.

“The Hilltopper Council wasn’t sure we were going to be able to pull off Winter Frolic this year, but we did.” While the activities were modified, they still served the purpose of bringing the student body together in the middle of the long Duluth winter. In many ways the decisions the Hilltopper Council had to make around Winter Frolic week were a microcosm of the entire school year. Almost everything had to be adapted in the interest of safety. Some of the changes were hard, even as they were temporary. But other changes became an opportunity for improvement that will continue even when “things return to normal.”

Brandon Hieb, Marshall’s Facilities Director, was in charge of preparing the building for the return of students

this fall. “We spent three months planning and modifying the building to ensure we had a safe environment for students and teachers.” Classrooms were stripped of non-essentials, desks were removed so that each room would only hold 50% occupancy with desks spaced about six feet apart. An entirely new cleaning and sanitizing protocol was developed and practiced. The HVAC system was fine tuned to increase the circulation of fresh air. Hallways were modified for one way traffic, and direction and safety signs hung throughout the building. “We created places that could be used as outdoor classrooms, and even erected a 40x80 tent in the front of the school for classes to use,” Brandon said.

Marshall’s independence, relatively small size, and experienced and talented faculty allowed the school to quickly pivot online in March 2020, so Hilltoppers spent the entire spring in an online learning mode. Almost unbelievably, there were no instructional days lost in the spring. But as successful as the shift was, there was no question that if students could be back in person—even for part of the week—there would be strong advantages for both academic and social-emotional learning. What emerged, after weeks of planning, was a daily schedule that would work whether the school was completely in-person, or all online, and a “dial” approach to bring students back on campus in a variety of hybrid formats depending on the spread of the virus.

“I had a feeling of gratitude the first day of school,” senior **Oscar Timm** remembered. “It was great to be back.” **Sydney Cummins '21** recalled that it was hard to adapt at first to

the new year, since “we had to learn a whole new way of doing things.” Fellow Class of 2021 member **Charlie Prior** noted how “difficult it was to recognize and get to know new students wearing masks.” In addition to the new safety protocols, students had to become familiar with the strategies teachers had developed to teach both in-person and online.

Learning in a hybrid classroom has different opportunities and challenges. Students were introduced to several techniques to ensure success. One key element was the use of “drop folders” in the middle of the week to preview and make available the work for the upcoming week. Another strategy was choosing and implementing a “core four” of technology tools for students to use. Math teacher **Paul Pearson** has been impressed by the attitude he has seen in the student body: “In a difficult situation, I hear very little complaining; they seem to understand everyone is facing the same challenges.”

There have been significant modifications to the schedule of the school day to ensure a safe environment. Students are screened before they enter the building, and those who need to arrive early or stay late are required to stay in their assigned locations on campus. As athletics were allowed to resume, a strict COVID-19 protocol was developed for every team. Class periods have been lengthened and passing times shortened to reduce congregating. In a similar vein, there have not been all-school gatherings and the middle and upper schools stay in their own wings. At the end of the day, students are dismissed in waves. One of the biggest challenges was how to provide a physically-distanced lunchtime and the solution has been surprisingly successful: advisory groups eating together in the classrooms of their advisors. For teachers, it has been a year of constant adaptation: Teaching simultaneously to students in-person as well as students learning online from home. It has also meant, when the spread of the virus required it, moving quickly online for all students. Marshall was able to spend the first ten weeks of the 2020-2021 school year in a hybrid instructional format, with students on campus four days a week. The steep increase in regional case counts around the holidays required a transition to online learning for all grades in mid-November. But by January, students were able to return to campus.



Upper school strings shared a livestream performance during advisory in the fall.

CHANGES



Maintenance crews took a quick mask break to pose for a photo. Evening Maintenance Crew: Kathy Jurasek, Vinnie Ventling, Kelsey Cherne, Mitch Britton. Daytime Maintenance Crew: Craig Coffey, Brandon Hieb, Rick Guernndt




History teacher **Sorrel Kaspzak** remarked, “[I was] most surprised about the continuous change that is needed to keep everything running. It has been heartening to see how agile human beings are. We started with what curriculum and classes might look like in August and all of that has morphed and pulsed throughout this whole year. We learned that more was possible than we thought.”

A point of emphasis this year has been to use the outdoors as both a place and an opportunity with students, as the reduced risk of transmission outdoors can create a sense of safety for both kids and adults. Even in the winter, Marshall’s 40-acre campus has been an advantage that was amplified when the operations team created an outdoor skating rink on the tennis courts. Upper school grades have had “class days” full of skiing, skating and sliding to build

community and provide the social interactions many students have missed. Middle school classes have made outdoor activities a part of the weekly rotation. According to Assistant Principal **Matt Whittaker ’02**, “The amount of learning that occurs when kids are outside is amazing. Not only are they learning in the moment how to be attentive to an entirely different set of stimuli than indoors, but the activity enhances the ability to focus inside. I was blown away in an afternoon discussion with 4th graders following a cross-country ski class; the level of engagement and wonder was amazing.”

There has also been a significant effort to adjust the pacing of the year. Knowing that there were likely going to be shifts throughout the year in the calendar, grading periods were reduced to six weeks. There has been a focus on grading and assessment to help ensure

equity as a result of the impacts of COVID-19 on individual students and families. The weekly schedule also was modified, with Wednesdays becoming a hybrid day that embraced more flexible instruction and individual student support. While it is difficult to predict exactly what the next school year will look like, science teacher **Dave “Mr. DJ” Johnson** wants everyone to continue “to be all in and pulling in the same direction. We were flexible, resilient, and helped support wonderfully independent student learners.”


Associate Head of School **Karen Snyder** summed up the possibilities: “Against the odds this year we found a way to continue our traditions of excellent teaching and learning and building strong relationships. Next year we hope that there will be fewer limitations and less restrictions on being together. We found success in the hardest time, and it is exciting to think of the opportunities ahead.” 

2021 FUND-A-NEED: SNYDER-DURANT PARK



The Marshall curriculum has always included outdoor learning and physical activity specifically designed to improve academic performance, self-discipline, and ability to focus. This type of play supports our ability to foster lifelong habits for a healthy lifestyle and develop skills such as problem solving, leadership, creativity, persistence, and communication.

In an effort to enhance our ability to offer outdoor opportunities to all of our students, this year’s Fund-a-Need will build an innovative outdoor classroom and activity park. The new activity space will be named in honor of two outstanding faculty members who are celebrating 31 years at Marshall School, middle school principal Karen Snyder and middle school English teacher Lori Durant, both of whom were instrumental in the founding of our middle school.

Snyder-Durant Park will be built where we currently have our playground. Because of its close proximity to the building, the playground space is the area most commonly used during recess, gym, and for short classroom outings during the day. Improvements to the area will include replacing the outdated playground with equipment designed for middle and upper schoolers, designing a walking path, and building a permanent covered outdoor classroom for the various learning activities that occur every day at Marshall. 

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If you would like to make a Fund-a-Need gift, visit marshallschool.org/fund-a-need or send a check to Marshall School attention Fund-a-Need.



BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY TOGETHER



Stepping into a new-to-you space for the first time comes with a wide range of emotions, regardless of whether it's the first day of school, the first time in the board room, or the first time leading a committee or initiative. Adding the challenges of doing that thousands of miles away from home creates the perfect storm for feeling overwhelmed. For the Marshall community, it also presents the perfect opportunity to mobilize the mission statement through the International Ambassador Program.

Launched in 2018, the program aims to help new international students transition into our community and to provide student leaders with the tools to foster an inclusive environment within the Marshall School community.

This school year set a record for the number of different countries represented on campus through the international program, with students hailing from nine countries. To help ease the adjustment,

incoming international students are connected with domestic ambassadors before their arrival so the pairs have a foundation to build on during the school year through various activities and events.

Ella Grim '21 joined the student ambassador program at its inception and has participated wholeheartedly. "My second [international student match] and I have become good friends. We didn't struggle much with getting to know each other;



Although it was easier to connect in person during pre-pandemic times (shown here), students in the ambassador program are committed to building relationships.

we'd been emailing before she arrived, and once she was here we built on that by hanging out, touring Duluth, and celebrating her birthday. We have a lot in common personality-wise, so we were able to bond pretty quickly," she shared. "Our biggest strength in overcoming the barriers of meeting someone new was curiosity. We both wanted to know more about the other's family, interests, and life experiences, so we had a lot to talk about! We've kept building our friendship over the past two years, and she's one of the people I'm closest with at Marshall."

Maritsa Harris '22 has had a similar experience through the program: "Last year I was matched with a student from Japan. We became very close; she played basketball with me and we would study together every once in a while. It was a great moment sharing the section champs title with her. I was so proud of how far each of us came that basketball season. When school had to pivot to distance learning I drove up to Marshall to say goodbye before she left for Japan. Today we still talk and interact on social media. I'm hoping to visit her this summer or next."

Beyond meeting the need to support new international students, the program also provides a natural space for domestic students to explore their own cultural lenses and gain self-awareness about their worldviews. According to **Jessica Martinelli '22**, "Allyship training has allowed me to be more conscious of prejudice and biases as well as how to navigate and deal with them. It has also made me realize that everyone has different life experiences and that we can learn from our different experiences. I feel like in applying allyship training to my life I've tried to be more understanding and compassionate to others' feelings and beliefs."

From the beginning, it was evident that the program is mutually beneficial for international students and the Marshall community at large. "It's important to understand that though the program was created for the explicit purpose of supporting our international students, it was imperative that this provides the groundwork to create a more inclusive school community for everyone," explained **Bettina Keppers**, Director of Residential Life at Marshall House. "It lays the foundation for true friendship and empathy across differences. The ambassadors have committed to understanding how it's possible to overcome cross-cultural communication and miscommunication, how to interrupt an inappropriate conversation regardless of the issue being discussed, how to recognize their own bias in a situation to address it more objectively, and how to help a student through culture shock."


IT LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR TRUE FRIENDSHIP AND EMPATHY ACROSS DIFFERENCES

This level of commitment for Hilltoppers in the program is evident. "The ambassador program provides an amazing opportunity to build cross-cultural connections and understanding. The fun bonding activities we do give us all the space to share our experiences and push our understanding of other identities," Ella said. "Really, though, we all learn that our similarities are stronger than any differences. We might worship differently, speak a different set of languages, or celebrate different holidays,

but [maybe] we share music tastes or are both the oldest sibling in our family or love cooking across cultures. These commonalities pull us together. We learn to respect and celebrate everyone's cultural identity while finding and building on the identities we share."

For Bettina, Marshall's identity as a school that prioritizes global citizenship is fully realized through the relationships these students form. "To be a truly global community, I believe we must first be able to know ourselves, the impact our words and actions have on others, and be willing to be vulnerable enough to make mistakes. We have so much we can learn from one another if we're willing to be vulnerable enough to try something new, to work through something awkward, and come out on the other side of the situation stronger and more understanding. Our ability to know ourselves, empathize with others' experiences, and create new experiences together creates a sense of belonging."

Bettina continued, "I feel the entire Marshall community benefits from a strong student ambassador program. Our ambassadors are leaders who have chosen empathy and to build relationships with someone new. They're brave, they're taking a stand, and they're bringing our mission statement to life: Global citizenship, respect, compassion, integrity, self-discipline, and intellectual curiosity."

Jessica agreed wholeheartedly: "It's important to know that every student who travels abroad to come to Marshall is very brave and makes the Marshall community richer for having them there. Also, that it's important to be open in all senses of the word regarding belief, curiosity, and intention. As well as remembering that we can learn from each other and how we treat others matters." 



▲
Above: Strawberry picking was a favorite activity for the “Summer Seven”—the group of students who stayed at Marshall House through the summer due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL LENS: SNAPSHOTS OF THE PANDEMIC

BY CHRISTA KNUDSEN '92

Marshall’s international program enrolls approximately 40 students per year from 8-10 countries. Most live in Marshall House, the school’s on-campus residence, and several also live in off-site international houses. Students from Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, Spain, Hungary, Russia, Finland and Uganda chose to learn at Marshall in 2020-21. Some are learning in-person, some are at home, still waiting to get here. Some chose to return home temporarily; several haven’t been home since August of 2019. These are just a few of their stories.

The coronavirus pandemic has shifted life as we knew it in ways that defy description. All of us have experienced the pandemic, and it is just as true that we have experienced it uniquely. Both our collective and the individual stories are important, lighting the way towards greater compassion for where we’ve been and greater understanding of where we might be going as individuals, communities and institutions. In this story, we hover at a point in time over the experiences of three international Hilltoppers during the pandemic, in hopes of illuminating the larger picture of adaptation, trust, hopes, and dreams that have carried Marshall’s international program through the pandemic. Fittingly, this is a true story of global citizenship.

MARCH 2020



ADAM KOVACS '22

ADAM KOVACS '22 was in Sweden to try out for the hockey program at a new prospective school when it hit him – the pandemic was not only real, but winning. Within the week the announcement was made that the program would not operate in 2020-21, and the news coming from elsewhere in Europe, where Adam’s family lives, was similar. Through a connection with new Alumni and Hockey Operations Director **Jasen Wise**, Adam applied to Marshall. With hopes that the Northland would remain relatively immune to growing numbers elsewhere, allowing in-person attendance and the continuation of athletics, Adam enrolled.



HANA KIM '21


HANA KIM '21’s family was meanwhile growing more concerned daily about rising COVID-19 numbers in the United States, and the more frequent news of closing borders to travelers from countries considered “high risk.” Hana was in her second year at Marshall as a junior and living at Marshall House at the time. Inside the United States over the past two months, the virus had gone from distant news to spreading rapidly domestically, and the governor of Minnesota had just placed the state under a “stay-at-home” order, changing life at school and in the dorm overnight. Because Marshall was able to quickly transition to online learning, Hana’s family chose to bring her home to Korea to complete the year.





JESSICA NGUYEN '22

JESSICA NGUYEN '22 was looking to her friend group for comfort and community in the midst of what she remembers as “a chaotic time.” Using social media and video for much of her academic and social connection was new, and learning and interacting mostly in her room at Marshall House was a challenge, both in terms of motivation and social isolation. Jessica’s home country of Vietnam was one of the earliest to close its borders to inbound travelers, but even more importantly, U.S. embassies would not be open to renew visas allowing students’ re-entry in the fall. Jessica’s family (along with all enrolled Vietnamese parents) determined that the students’ best option was to remain at Marshall for the indefinite future and ride out what was hoped to be a short-lived disruption.

AUGUST 2020


 **ADAM KOVACS** arrived in the U.S., and per Marshall House's current onboarding policy, spent two weeks quarantining prior to moving into the dormitory. Fall was a rollercoaster of experiences and emotions. Being in-person, though masked and distanced, was wonderful and appreciated, as he knew his friends at home weren't in school at all. Attending an American co-ed school with a different culture and social norms was initially a challenge, and just when he was starting to feel comfortable, school went online and athletics were postponed in an effort to curb locally growing cases of the virus. At the time it was a low point, but looking back Adam says that Marshall's in-person start to the year gave him just enough time to make the connections with teachers and peers that he would need to sustain him through the challenges ahead.


 **HANA KIM** and her newly enrolled sister Grace arrived in Duluth in early August, spending two weeks in quarantine prior to moving into Marshall House. Although grateful to be in-person, Hana initially struggled with the pandemic's impact on classroom teaching and learning. "It felt weird," Hana said. "I was here for almost two years before COVID, and I missed the group work, the games, the scenarios we would enact together, and just the variety of things we could do." Interacting in pods also meant a difference in opportunities to get to know new students, students in other grade levels, even new students in Marshall House due to masking and gathering restrictions. On the other side however, Hana felt especially close to her teachers, and was conscious of the effort they had made to be present for her while learning in Korea, as well as the current demands of balancing the needs of in-person and distance learners.


 In August, **JESSICA NGUYEN** was eagerly awaiting the arrival of each new student to Duluth. Jessica and six other Vietnamese students had spent the summer at Marshall House. The students' inability to return home generated the first-ever international summer program, with students spending a week paddling in the Boundary Waters, celebrating the 4th of July with fireworks and a barbeque, swimming, biking, picking local berries and celebrating a week of strawberry-inspired cooking. Students and staff spent hours together making traditional food, studying for the ACT, improving writing skills, and studying for the TOEFL. Even so, Jessica was ready for new faces, and spent the better part of the month making sure new students felt welcomed and included, working creatively with the safety precautions in place to make connections.



MARCH 2021

 **ADAM KOVACS** is happy to be back with friends in-person since January 4th, 2021. In retrospect, he felt like no time had been missed at all. For Adam, in-person learning is much more motivating, although he has recognized through his experience this past year that there are differences between learners, and that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate for most things involving learning. He is exceedingly grateful for his Marshall teachers who are "doing a great job!" and his Marshall friends who treat each other with a sense of kindness and egalitarianism that is new to him. When he finds himself thinking about what could have been different, or what he might have missed because of the pandemic, he is quick to also think that without it, he may never have been a Hilltopper. And for that, no matter what, he is grateful.

 **HANA KIM** knows that the adults and students in the Marshall community are doing their best to support her and all students. As a senior, she is holding out hope for an in-person graduation ceremony, and prom. She hopes that her sister, Grace, will eventually experience the school spirit she experienced as a new 10th grader during pep rallies, assemblies, Homecoming and Winter Frolic weeks, and that the full spectrum of teaching and learning activities that existed at Marshall pre-pandemic will soon return. Despite the changes and challenges, her teachers have emerged as true heroes in the pandemic. "When I returned to Korea last spring," says Hana, "I was shocked by how my teachers would get up early in the morning to reach out to me despite the time difference. Their willingness to be there, despite the difficulty, really moved me."

 **JESSICA NGUYEN** says that although her parents called her every day for a time, they now talk twice per week, as they have genuine trust and relief that Marshall School has and will keep her safe. She has found the adults around her to be encouraging, flexible, empathetic, and supportive for the duration of her experience, and has built relationships with them that include personal conversations, jokes, and mutual entertainment and support. She has become much better at technology, and the Marshall core value of self-discipline. By learning how to encourage herself at a time when others weren't physically present to do so, she has grown more confident, and more independent. A thought that had never been a serious consideration recently became clear to her as Jessica now hopes to pursue a career in the medical field where she can help people, as she has seen others do this past year.

THE PARENT ANGLE

VIET NGUYEN, FATHER OF TRI '19, AND BON '22

How have you been able to stay connected to Marshall and to your children during the pandemic? How has Marshall kept your trust and confidence?
We have appreciated all the communication from Marshall, from emails to Facebook updates, we have felt connected throughout. We stayed in touch with our children daily through messaging and video apps. Marshall has earned the parents' trust by being proactive and managing unfavorable situations well. Staff have always been there to reassure our children and their parents that they are always safe and will stay healthy at the [Marshall] House and on campus.

What are the biggest challenges you face as international parents during the pandemic? What will you be most grateful for looking back on this year from a future time?
The biggest challenge has been the concern around our children being well-supported in protecting themselves against the spread of COVID-19, while maintaining their education. Looking back on this time, we will never forget the care and devotion of Marshall people who have sacrificed to keep our children in a safe home during these hard times.

How do you think Marshall is preparing your children for the future, even during the pandemic?
Marshall is doing a great thing for our children by educating them as always to be a global citizen as the mission states. But during the pandemic Marshall has done a most valuable thing by modeling how to face challenges skillfully, knowledgeably, and with compassion.

THE LONG LENS



Karen Stiles connected with distance-learning students various ways this year, including over video chat.




INTERNATIONAL DISTANCE LEARNERS

The pandemic has caused myriad disruptions to international student mobility. International travel restrictions, and the shuttering of most services provided by U.S. embassies, has complicated and delayed the arrival of many new international students, with some still waiting for visa interviews in countries like China and Uganda. Additionally over the past year, safety concerns have pushed large and small groups of International Hilltoppers home for periods

of time to learn remotely. Marshall's commitment to serving students disadvantaged by the pandemic.

To help facilitate online learners, **Karen Stiles** is Marshall's new Distance Learning Specialist in addition to her continued role with traditional in-person classes. Karen currently supports students in China, Korea, and Uganda with weekly and sometimes daily Zoom meetings. She sets expectations,

teaches organizational and study skills, and also serves as a liaison between remote students and in-person teachers. In addition, Marshall's IT office has developed a series of onboarding Loom videos and walk-throughs of Marshall's key applications and tools (G-Suite, Schoology, etc.). In more ways than one, Marshall has extended our reach beyond the borders of the traditional work day and content delivery methods to meet the needs of these most remote of learners. 

ALUMNI



FACEBOOK
Marshall School
@MarshallHilltoppers



YOUTUBE CHANNEL
Youtube.com/DuluthMarshallSchool



ALUMNI WEBSITE
marshallschool.org/alumni

NEWS & NOTES

60'S

Kirby Sollom '66 shares, "Vietnam Vet - Marine Corps - '66-'76. Retired 2016. Class of '66 or [around there], feel free to contact me. Love to hear from my classmates."

90'S

Jordan Johnson '90 writes, "Moved back to Duluth in August 2019 and happy to be back in my hometown. I am the Executive Director of Life House and grateful to be working with young people in our community."

Krista Mickelson '92 shares, "After eleven long years, I completed my B.S. in Accounting and graduated from Metropolitan State University in August."

00'S

Lilo (Stuecher) Schluender '00 writes, "Legal Aid Service of Northeastern Minnesota is proud to announce and welcome Lilo Schluender as our Private Attorney Involvement (Pro-Bono) Director. Lilo most recently served as a managing attorney for legal services in Minneapolis. In her new role, Lilo will be coordinating with the private bar to close the justice gap and to advocate for the legal rights of disadvantaged to have safe, healthy, and independent lives in strong communities."

10'S

Jonathan Lipovetz '15 shares, "I graduated from UMN-Twin Cities with a degree in Computer Science in May 2019 and started as a Software Engineer at Google in Seattle, July 2019. I've been there since, working on the Chrome Web Store."

IN MEMORIAM

Clarence LaLiberte '36
Dorothy (Kaltenhauser) Barker '41
James H. Doyle '43
James Hady '47
James T. Hart '47
Mildred (DeBot) Klein '49
Nancy (Higgins) Davidson '50
Sister Barbara Higgins '53
Michael Zempel '53
Patrick Balgaard '54
Nancy (Miller) Needham '54
Jerry Patnaude '55
Irene (Higgins) Williams '55
Maureen (Horn) Dalnes '55
Thomas Murray '55
Thomas Beaupre '56
Robert Stokes '56
Larry Kuberra '57
Donna Lee (Staubert) Stratioti '66
Thomas Fontaine '67
Mary Catherine
(McCarthy) Fisher '70
Dianne Lee Irvin '70
James Leslie '79
Jim Bergl '91
Sophia Benson '20

REUNION

We missed having alumni on campus last summer! Join us on July 16th & 17th, 2021 as we celebrate all of our alumni, especially our Milestone Classes—1950/1951, 1960/1961, 1970/1971, 1980/1981, 1990/1991, 2000/2001, and 2010/2011—for our All-Class Mixer on Friday evening. We highly recommend registering for the event ahead of time so you receive updates that may have an impact on any travel plans. To RSVP and for more information, visit marshallschool.org/alumni/reunion-celebration.

**Friday, July 16th,
4:30pm-6:30pm:
All-Class Mixer on campus
at Marshall School**

**Saturday, July 17th, 11:30am:
Golden Topper Luncheon on
campus for the Class of 1971 and
earlier.**

If you are interested in helping organize additional events for your class, we want to hear from you! Contact Jasen Wise at 218.727.7266 x112 or alumni@marshallschool.org.

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO, WIN \$25!

Just like it feels great to clean out a closet or a garage, it feels great to tidy up our database! Update your contact information by June 1st and we will enter you into a drawing for a \$25 egift card to a store near you. Find the form at marshallschool.org/alumniupdate. Thanks and good luck!

GIVING MATTERS



BECCA RUBENFELD '00

Hilltopper alumni are invited to participate in Reunion giving when a milestone year rolls around, and Becca Rubenfeld '00 rose to the challenge ahead of her 20th Reunion. We took that opportunity to catch up with Becca and hear about life after her time on the Hilltop.

Where did you end up after Marshall? After graduating from Marshall, I continued my liberal arts education in a huge university setting at Arizona State's Barrett Honors College and got degrees in Finance and Marketing. I spent the next nine years in the offices of apparel companies like American Eagle Outfitters, choosing the assortment and building financial plans. I'm now celebrating nine years at the Starbucks corporate offices in Seattle. I've had the opportunity to work on a diverse set of projects, and the love of learning that Marshall fostered has served me well throughout my career and has allowed me to explore business through a variety of disciplines and lenses. Outside of work, I always keep busy; I'm not one to sit still. I have a son, James, who was adopted at 14 from Ukraine. He's grown now at 22, is living nearby in Seattle, and it's one of my greatest joys to see him thriving and finding his feet in the world. Most of my free time over the last few years was spent renovating my house—carpentry is my favorite! I am an avid skier and I try to get into the mountains weekly. Recently, I've been going deep into learning about blockchain technology and I also have a couple of side hustles. I love to stay productive!

What about your experience at Marshall helped prepare you for where you are in your life today?

I came to Marshall in seventh grade just after having been diagnosed with ADHD, and I was trying to understand how to be successful. Marshall challenged me with a world of new ideas: How to discuss ideas and to love ideas. There is nothing more exciting than the chemical rush of learning something that stimulates my mind in a new way. My teachers allowed me to be myself while helping me build structures and good habits, and let the results speak for themselves. This built my confidence and allowed me to push forward through challenges and trust myself.

Why was it important to you to support Marshall through your class gift?

I believe I got something from Marshall that I wouldn't have received in another environment. Marshall was what I needed when I needed it, and I want to be sure other kids can get what they need to thrive.

Because we were not able to celebrate Reunion in-person last year, this year we are celebrating the milestone class years of 1960 and 1961, 1970 and 1971, 1980 and 1981, 1990 and 1991, 2000 and 2001, and 2010 and 2011. To make a gift in honor of your class and help support future Hilltoppers, please use the enclosed envelope or visit marshallschool.org/giving.

Marshall School

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marshallschool.org

Are you receiving more than one Hilltopper at your address?

You can update your family member's information at marshallschool.org/alumni.

Would you prefer not to receive a printed copy of the Hilltopper?

You can request to unsubscribe at alumni@marshallschool.org.

