THE HILLTOPPER

THE SPACE BETWEEN

SPRING 2022
FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

JAMIE STECKART

“I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED, AND I STILL BELIEVE, THAT WHATEVER GOOD OR BAD FORTUNE MAY COME OUR WAY WE CAN ALWAYS GIVE IT MEANING AND TRANSFORM IT INTO SOMETHING OF VALUE.” - HERMANN HESSE

If not for Covid, I would not be here at Marshall School. This is not to diminish or make light of the devastating aspects of a pandemic, but for our family, Covid brought us to Duluth and this school, and for that I am grateful.

From 2014 to 2020, my wife Angie and I, and our children—Charlotte, Finn, and Piper. In less than 72 hours, they were home in Cornucopia, Wisconsin, narrowly escaping border closures by the State of Cornucopia, Wisconsin to Marshall, narrowly escaping border closures by the State of Cornucopia, Wisconsin to Marshall.

In Roman mythology, Fortuna was the goddess of chance and luck; she often bears a cornucopia depicting wealth and abundance. Perhaps the Goddess of the Cornucopia would be subtly guiding our family from Cornucopia, Wisconsin to Marshall, this symbolism became further apparent when, after over a year of searching for a house, we found one that had been hauled across the ice from Cornucopia to Duluth at the turn of the century. If that were not enough, this particular house had also been occupied by a longstanding Hilltopper family. This could not be just coincidence, but rather a beautifully enhanced connection to the Twin Ports.

And I find it exhilarating. In the midst of one of the worst health crises in 100 years, Marshall has met the challenge. We are not in retreat; rather, we are in active expansion. We have been a leader in keeping schools open during the pandemic and consistently have had some of the very highest vaccination rates of schools in the United States. Here, in the center of the Northland, Marshall continues to have a history and reputation of being a connector of people and communities and prioritizes that role. As we reevaluate our mission, strategic plan, and responsibility to the region, it becomes clear that we need to increase access to Marshall’s amazing educational opportunities.

As a result, we are launching the Marshall School Forest School at Marshall to serve our youngest learners, beginning at age four through fourth grade. Reading on grade level by the end of third grade is one of the most critical milestones in education, and we have vowed to be part of the solution. In addition, we are exploring ways to help with the area’s child care shortages. It is an exciting time to be at Marshall. Our alumni and former families have been through many transitions with us in the past, and their experience and knowledge help guide us through uncharted waters. I encourage you to join us in this next adventure as we continue to move Marshall into a new chapter of serving the Twin Ports and beyond.

Jamie Steckart

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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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A fine time for a rhyme! The entire upper school participated in Poetry Out Loud, the annual poetry recitation contest; finalists in the classroom rounds then competed on this special January evening. Pictured are winners Dasia Starks ’22, Lucia Watson ’22, and Audrey Moeller ’25.

Hilltopper alumni from across Minnesota came together to cheer on the Minnesota Wild and share stories of their days on campus.

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The family of beloved Marshall Coach Brendan Flaherty ’82 takes the ice to receive a colored pencil memorial drawing from local artist, Tim Cortes. A large print of the work will hang at Mars Arena. Left to right: Kasey Yoder ’03, Morgan Flaherty ’14, Carrie Flaherty, Tim Cortes.

Two previously connected classrooms in the middle school are opened completely to make room for our new Forest School at Marshall. Next fall, we will excitedly welcome an energetic group of curious young learners age four through fourth grade.

He shoots, he scores! Jasper Timm ’22 slams his 1,000th career point, becoming only the 15th player in our program history to reach that milestone.

Riley Hutchinson ’23 makes a strong start during the State Nordic Meet at Giants Ridge. He joined Weston Heeren ’24 (alpine) in representing our Marshall skiers. Congrats you two!

Winter Frolic couples compete for glory as they take on the Cupid Shuffle during the final pep assembly of the week.

The seventh grade trip to Camp Widjiwagen was canceled, so teachers brought Widji Daze to the Marshall campus. Students hiked, enjoyed a campfire, and made an exciting adventure of many outdoor activities.

“She pined in thought, and with a green and yellow melancholy, she sat like patience on a monument, smiling at grief.” Shakespeare returns as students brought live theater back from the pandemic with the November production of Twelfth Night in Marshall’s Fregeau Auditorium.

Bundled up and ready to jam, senior Reese Orn ’22 leads the band through the streets of downtown Duluth in the 2021 Christmas City of the North Parade.
The 2021 Formal Environmental Educator of the Year Award honors an individual who has made outstanding, ongoing efforts to infuse environmental education into school curriculum; we are proud to congratulate our own Dave “Mr. DJ” Johnson as the year’s recipient. The award is bestowed by the Minnesota Association of Environmental Education, an organization which aims to strengthen the role of education as a solution to environmental and societal challenges.

DJ was nominated by Marte Kitson, Extension Educator at Minnesota Sea Grant, who noted that he is an outstanding teacher—sincere, earnest, dedicated, hard-working—and is creating excitement, inspiration, and a sense of wonder in students to inform a long-term interest in environmental sciences and related careers. DJ’s development of a comprehensive monitoring protocol for Brewery Creek, which runs through Marshall’s beautiful campus, involved students in his passion to observe our environment while also connecting with the greater community. Through this project, students have worked in collaboration with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s Citizen Water Monitoring Program, St. Louis River Watch, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota’s Natural Resource Research Institute, and the City of Duluth. Way to go Mr. DJ!

We live in the present moment, this fragile and wondrous space where we possess the memory to look back with reflection while also retaining applied knowledge and reason to press forward. This human ability to plan, chart, and craft an expectation is met with the absolute chaos and unpredictability of actual life. Whether our path onward develops in the form of perceived fate and divine interventions or as a result of hard-work and grit, the ability to push through challenges in that space and continue on with resiliency is a topic of great interest these days.

This issue of the Hilltopper explores what happens in “the space between,” the gray area between known and unknown, the space of transition, change, and adaptation—seasoned with the verbs of movement, travel, forward momentum, progression, transformation. Through the eyes of our Hilltopper family, we examine the necessary and unavoidable periods of development in life where what happens can be hard and uncomfortable, or hopeful and exciting—the only difference being the lens of attitude through which we are looking.

In the accompanying pages, journey with us as we explore these transitions, beginning with our Head of School moving his family and career in times of immediate and unprecedented change, identifying needs of the community, and choosing to be part of positive momentum forward. We have staff retiring and entering a new chapter of life, being recognized for the bridges built between students, science, and the environment, and charting Marshall’s history through periods of adaptation, development, and growth to the most recent creation of the much-anticipated Forest School. In our classrooms, students are venturing out from the bubble of Marshall School to connect with area farmers to collaborate and use engineering studies to solve real problems, learning and pushing through challenges along the way. And in the space between semesters, our learners and teachers are exploring new and exciting subjects through iTerm courses.

As we work to prepare our seniors to transition to their first year at college and beyond, we also speak with an alum who, in parallel, is helping at-risk youth through unprecedented change, identifying needs of the community, and choosing to be part of positive momentum forward. We have staff retiring and entering a new chapter of life, being recognized for the bridges built between students, science, and the environment, and charting Marshall’s history through periods of adaptation, development, and growth to the most recent
THE BONES ARE GOOD

BY CHRISTA KNUDSEN ’92

Marshall School, once known as Duluth Cathedral High School, has a long history of serving the Twin Ports community. When it was first established in 1904, the school was located in downtown Duluth and served girls and boys, grades nine through twelve, separated between two campuses. The curriculum was challenging, but had been thoughtfully developed to inspire wonder and a lifelong thirst for knowledge. School culture and traditions were interwoven with Catholic principles of compassion, service, and community. Cathedral students came from all corners of Duluth, bonded not by neighborhood, but by a desire for quality teaching, learning, and community.

Cathedral High students moved to a co-educational campus at our current Hilltop home in 1963 with a goal of enrolling 1,000 Hilltoppers, grades nine to twelve. Just eight years later, a decision came that would forever alter the course of the institution: after 67 years, the Diocese would no longer sustain the operation of a Catholic high school. At this critical time in 1971, the Board of Directors of Cathedral High had to decide if, and how, to move forward after receiving such devastating news.

The school faced a future without its major source of funding and support, and the teachings of the Church could no longer serve as the blueprint for architecting the path to young adulthood. Despite significant obstacles, the Board was convinced that the school’s place in Duluth was important, and that the Hilltopper community, held together by shared values, could survive the transformation required to remain vital. Reinigorated by the school’s mission as a “Beacon on the Hill” for Duluth students seeking strong teaching, individual attention, and a welcoming community, trustees and faculty began the work of breathing new life into old bones by charting a fresh course toward anticipated futures, and constructing a solid framework toward young adulthood for Hilltoppers based on the changing times.

The wisdom of the newly-charted course was a paradox. Embracing the future successfully required a different, yet relatable, expression of the foundational values of the existing institution—a commitment to challenging students, inspiring wonder, and fostering a lifelong pursuit of knowledge while instilling values of compassion, service, and community. For Marshall, adaptability has always been key to long-term sustainability in the community. It has been part of our “origin story” since 1904. Marshall’s independent school status allows for maximum flexibility and responsiveness; at the same time, it tethers the school to a delicate business model with tuition and demand, philanthropy, and careful shepherding of resources. This is why the best independent schools don’t (and can’t) rest on their laurels, but must derive from the past as they continually adapt and build for the future.

Marshall’s calling has always been to continue breathing new life into old bones. What other method could keep an institution both trusted and vital for over 100 years? Here on the Hill, we are lucky. Since the school’s inception, the curriculum has been designed to challenge students, inspire wonder, and foster a life-long pursuit of knowledge. School culture and traditions are still interwoven with values of compassion, service, and community. Just like Cathedral students 118 years ago, today’s Marshall students come from all corners of Duluth and beyond, united by a geography of shared values that have stood the test of time. The bones are good, and the spirit that still flows through the organization seems eminently renewable.

30 YEARS OF ADAPTATION

1993
Marshall Middle School created to expand teachings to more grade levels and differentiate the needs of middle school students from high school students.

2010
International Program created to expand enrollment to Hilltoppers outside the United States, furthering Marshall’s mission to educate students to become global citizens.

2016
Marshall House Residence built to protect the long-term sustainability of the International Program.

2016 to 2019
STEM and Arts facility renovations modernize classrooms for more competitive opportunity, teaching, and learning in the arts and sciences.

2020 to Present
Responsive pandemic adaptations allow Marshall to continue to thrive during great disruptions, pivoting seamlessly along the continuum of in-person and distance learning, while remaining reassuringly “Marshall” for students and families.

THE ORIGIN STORY CONTINUES

Fall 2022
The Forest School at Marshall is coming: a new lower school elementary program for students age four through fourth grade. The Forest School is a response to the needs of a new generation of parents who still value wonder and the life-long pursuit of knowledge, but who also seek quality research-backed teaching combined with connection to the outdoor paradise that inspires their love of Duluth. Forest School students will use the over 40 acres of Marshall’s outdoor campus as their classroom at least fifty percent of the time to connect with the environment, learning, and each other.

PICTURED: The original Duluth Cathedral High School located on Fourth Street and 2nd Avenue West in downtown Duluth.

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and McGiffert produced a small prototype. But, the girls encountered their own unexpected snag…

“What does it mean to be resilient? As a human being?” Dr. Schokker asked during her visit to the classroom, to which students responded, “Be strong!”

She continued, “What if you’re super strong and something still gets you down? That’s resilience. Say for a building… if I have an extreme event, I should not be damaged too much, and after the event, be able to bounce back.”

Dr. Schokker was referring to safety factors and stress in Civil Engineering, but the message of bouncing back was one that would apply to Kenny and McGiffert as they navigated the development of their engineering solution. They had begun on a video description of the problem, but when they spoke with Beaton two weeks later, discovered that the pulley was not going to hold a garden hose as they had envisioned, but “more like a fire hose!” filled with its current weight from water constantly pulsing through it. Kenny explained this moment of adaptable resilience, “One little detail can change your whole project,” as she thought, “this isn’t the end, we’re just going to keep working on this until we solve it.”

They pressed on, testing, exploring power tools they’d never touched before, cutting holes, experimenting with materials, hunting down correct-sized tools, trying to time emails back and forth with a farmer who works sunrise to sunset, coordinating communication, and learning to solve problems quickly. For a moment, the girls glimpsed the role of farmer as well. “Farming is really hard. You have a budget, and you have to get certain products out in time to make enough money to pay for living. All of the videos we watched were farmers going over little tools they made to save on costs, finding random stuff in their shed or garage, and like us, they are making their own designs with just the materials they have around them,” shared Kenney.

The girls intend to finish the project and test it on Beaton’s farm by the end of the school year.

Another farmer, Adam Kemp of Uffla Organics in Wrenshall, Minnesota, echoed their sentiments as he described his own farming challenge. “Coming up with good solutions is always very satisfying… the restraints of figuring out a way to do things quickly and effectively… cheap solutions. It’s nice when you can come up with solutions with materials you already have on the farm, especially if it’s an eloquent, simple solution. Kemp and his wife Jackie run a small organic family farm specializing in pick-your-own berries, baby greens, wholesale vegetables, and herbs. Kemp teamed up with juniors Odinn Kadlec ‘23 and Kyle Bollins ‘23 to address his current need: a customized seed distribution component that could spread seeds more efficiently, effectively, and without jamming. Kadlec and Bollins were able to talk with Kemp, sketch out ideas, and figure out how to squeeze 48 holes on to the spreader. They created a 3-D model in a computer program called Fusion360 for obtaining measurements, built the design in CAD, printed it on a 3-D printer, and had Kemp test the component on the actual seed spreader equipment. “The best part was seeing it work in the machine,” said Bollins proudly.

The boys ran into challenges with the accuracy of the 3-D printer, but were able to revive and file the inside of the seed wheel to the exact diameter needed. They found it rewarding to work on a project in school that would affect the community and help someone outside of Marshall, and to be able to see the physical benefits of growing food more efficiently. Kadlec and Bollins enjoyed communicating with a professional in the outside community and learned more about the farming industry, but they especially glow as they spoke about working in partnership with each other, brainstorming and combining ideas, collaboratively figuring out

PROBLEM / SOLUTION

BY KELLY SCHAMBERGER

“The Engineer solves the problem, and there may be more than one solution,” explains Dr. Andrea Schokker, Marshall Board of Trustees member, Professor, and Head of Civil Engineering at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Dr. Schokker visited with Paul Schonfeld’s engineering class to give students a glimpse of the applications for advanced engineering in the greater community and world. Schonfeld is one of several incredibly resourceful instructors who has introduced as he works to effectively bridge the gap between young learners in his classroom and phenomenal assets outside the school, creating connections and experiences with real-life impact.

Schonfeld is the Computer Science, Physics, and Engineering Instructor at Marshall and FRC Robotics Coach. Last summer, Schonfeld connected with farmers in the greater Twin Ports area to identify problems for Marshall Engineering Design students to solve. These projects would walk students through the basics of learning about problem and need, generating possible solutions, prototyping and refining a solution, and presenting their innovative developments.

One of these farmers was John Beaton, Founder, Director, and Co-Visionary of Fairhaven Farm located just north of Duluth. It turns out that farms are an excellent place to find problems to be solved, as Beaton shares, “We’re constantly challenged, always troubleshooting, and trying to solve a myriad of problems that we encounter. Being a farmer is really difficult. It requires a lot of different equipment, it requires many different skill sets. You don’t always have the exact thing you need, you sometimes you’ll find yourself inventing a tool, making it work, or making things go on the fly.”

In addition to supplying Community Supported Agriculture shares (CSAs), Fairhaven Farm produces greenhouse-grown starter plants. One of Beaton’s challenges is keeping up with demand for the plants and making sure they are well watered. His proposed need was for an improved pulley design to help move large watering hoses throughout the greenhouse, as his current pulley was pivoting and getting caught on the steel cable traversing the ceiling, thus taking up valuable time to detangle and free. Juniors Georgia Kenney ’23 and Bianca McGiffert ’23 weren’t going to leave Beaton hanging; they agreed to take on the task and quickly designed a pulley model with three bearings, creatively based on successful streetlight zipline designs. Using notebook sketches, the school’s Computer Aided Design (CAD) software, and a 3-D printer, Kenny and McGiffert produced a small prototype. But, the girls encountered their own unexpected snag…

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PICTURED:

Odinn Kadlec ‘23 and Kyle Bollins ‘23 show off their customized seed distribution component models.

PICTURED ABOVE:

Student Georgia Kenney ’23 displays a hose pulley prototype.

marshallschool.org
Starting a new school year fresh and hopeful for the months ahead is easy, but when students hit the second semester, things can feel quite a bit different. They’ve just had a couple of weeks off for the holiday break—the weather is cold—it’s dark when they arrive at school in the morning, and many times, it’s dark when they leave in the afternoon. It feels almost impossible to have the same energy starting semester two as everyone did for semester one.

That’s where iTerm comes in. The two-week session of “fun classes” gives our students and teachers a transitional jump-start to the second semester. Librarian Amanda Houle has been one of the invaluable staff members making sure iTerm runs smoothly since its inception in 2016. “iTerm serves as a reset for the students, as well as the faculty,” said Houle. “It’s a high-energy event that allows us to head into the second semester with a little bit of momentum.”

PICTURED:
1. Ms. Goodman takes the Arctic Winter Survival students outside for a dog sled demonstration.
2. Ms. Virta’s cross-stitching class shows students how to sew beautiful designs into fabric.
3. Mr. Lockhart weighs in on the gluing process during the paddle-making course.
4. Duluth Cathedral alum John Nephew ’87 returns to campus to speak to student game designers during Board Games, Probability & Game Design; he encourages the young creatives to craft a 30-second elevator pitch for any game they design. Nephew is the President and Co-Owner of Atlas Games, a company he started while still a student at Carleton College in 1990.

You can learn more about Nephew’s company at www.atlas-games.com.
SENIOR TRANSITIONS

BY TONY LOCKHART

There is a mystique to the senior year at any school—and Marshall is no different. In fact, with students in grades four through twelve together in our single building, younger students have years to watch and dream about their chance to be in the spotlight that comes with being a part of the graduating class. Seniors, after all, are usually the leaders of our athletic teams, student clubs, and activities. Their school spirit raises the energy whether cheering at games or in all school assemblies, and of course, graduation. But contrary to the glory-filled dreams and of course, graduation. But contrary to the glory-filled dreams

The senior year begins early, before the start of classes, with college essay-writing workshops led by Director of College Counseling Katie Yeller-Berdan. Through the first semester, the senior advisory period focuses on providing support in the college application process, as many students have their first deadlines in October and are making college visits and submitting applications throughout the fall. During the second semester the focus shifts, first to Senior Projects, a chance to pursue a final passion-based project at Marshall, and next to workshops on managing college life and exploring topics unique to the independence they will face in college and away from home.

Paul Pearson, long-time math teacher and member of the 25-year Club of Master Teachers, has a special perspective on the senior experience. In addition to being a Senior Advisor, his children Simon ’07, Phoebe ’09, and Noah ’12 are all Hilltopper alumni. According to Mr. Pearson, being a senior means “having many balls in the air and feeling stress from several different sources; there are extra-hardness like college applications and advanced placement classes. It can be hard to keep everything in perspective.”

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To help seniors keep a continued positive outlook through the year, Marshall organizes the process and dedicates advisory time to help students through the transition. The year includes three main themes: helping with the college search and decision process, preparing for future changes, and finally, celebrating the culmination of a high school career.

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Each senior approaches the college search process differently. Seniors Zak Etterson ’22 and Jack Vo ’22 remembered being at different ends of the experience, Etterson “hadn’t planned on the college search being so much a part of the fall,” while Vo thought “it would be more stressful than it was applying to colleges. Now that it is finished, it is relaxing.” Luke Moeller ’22 found a sense of independence in the college application process, “determining next steps and focusing on the future.”

But for many, while applying takes time, the next step of waiting for acceptance decisions is the hardest. Students that apply for early decision may know by January which school they will attend, but for others it isn’t until May that they truly know where they are headed. But for many, while applying takes time, the next step of waiting for acceptance decisions is the hardest. Students that apply for early decision may know by January which school they will attend, but for others it isn’t until May that they truly know where they are headed.

For many athletes, the final game of the season is the last time they will play competitively in their sports. There are last concerts and performances. The semi-formal MORP and final PROM have extra-meaning for seniors. “In a way, part of the year is about saying goodbye to the people, places, and events that have been a part of a senior’s world for the past four or eight years. The school year starts informally with a class ice-cream social, but ends formally with commencement. At every step along the way there is laughter— and tears.” Additionally, during every step, seniors still have classes and coursework to manage. Sam Aamodi ’22 “put it in perspective saying, “I thought it would be easier, but the coursework is still hard. Guess that is what you should expect when the number of the grade goes up.”

Many seniors take advantage of one final opportunity to put a capstone on their Marshall experience. Participating seniors create a comprehensive proposal that is reviewed by their advisors, and then spend the last two weeks of the school year working independently. The project culminates in a “TED Talk”-style presentation to their classmates and other Hilltoppers.

Several years ago, Marshall also embraced a new tradition for the twelfth grade: a final Senior Walk through the campus. On the last day, the entire senior class walks slowly together through the school, starting in the middle school and winding through the STEM wing and upper school. They are greeted by all of the students and teachers in the remaining grades. As the observers cheer, clap, and say farewell, the seniors have one last time at Marshall School to remember, smile, and laugh about their time together. Time together as friends and classmates, time together inside and outside classrooms, time together helping each other grow– literally and figuratively. And when the walk is done, so too is their final step of transition—now they are stepping together into the future.

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Senior Advisors, like Paul Pearson, have a special perspective on the senior year. They guide students through the transition from high school to college, helping them to navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with this important time in their lives. With the help of senior advisors, students can develop a strong sense of independence, focus on their future goals, and for many, the pinnacle of the senior experience. Participating seniors create a comprehensive proposal that is reviewed by their advisors, and then spend the last two weeks of the school year working independently. The project culminates in a “TED Talk”-style presentation to their classmates and other Hilltoppers.
In downtown Duluth, a phoenix rises from a large mural overtaking the entire side of a multi-story building. Nestled safely behind those towering red wings is Life House, a youth drop-in center serving ages 14 to 24, a place where nearly 1,000 youth physically and philosophically rise from ashes every year. At the helm of this organization is Dr. Jordan Johnson ’90, a Marshall graduate, trainer individual, and visionary who used an extraordinary fall of deep despair, wisdom, compassion, dedication, and love. And though he stands firm in his devotion to, and understanding of, the people he serves, it was only through a lifetime of challenge that fate brought him to this place.

Dr. Jordan began at Marshall School in seventh grade as Lara Evans. He moved to the Twin Cities with his mother in eighth grade, and then returned to Marshall his sophomore year. He was part of the basketball team and band, and graduated with a class of 44 students. What classmates and teachers didn’t see was a silent struggling life where his single mom was trying to provide physically and emotionally fleeing abusive situations. The Loft is an emergency youth shelter, while Sol House and the Northern Lights program house youth, and their children if needed, who are survivors of abuse or sexual exploitation. They also provide apartments and are looking forward to adding 32 additional units of housing in 2023. Funding for the programs comes from grants, local foundations, fundraising, and individual donations, thus allowing young people to access all of these services completely free of charge. Life House is also a place that does crisis intervention extremely well. Youth come to the drop center, connect, move to housing, get stabilized, work with the mental health and wellness team, and then start building. Through consistency, reliability, and commitment, the organization helps these individuals develop something that is often severely lacking—trust in oneself and trust in others. Dr. Johnson is grateful for this team of veteran staff, many who have been there five, ten, twenty years. Dependability is important, otherwise we risk retraumatizing our young people. Also, we have to think of volunteer engagement in a different framework. We need to model consistency, seeing the same faces, for these young people to know we’re not going anywhere,” explains Dr. Johnson.

For the future, he is working to build a more robust program to support young parents. Life House has also purchased a building across the street from their main location to create an “Imaginarium,” a healing-focused arts and music. This will be a home for the future music recording studio that the youth have been begging for—a space where stories and experiences can be shared in a safe and therapeutic way, where music can teach something that can’t be accessed otherwise. Eventually, the hope is that it is also a space for alternative and holistic clinicians and practitioners, body work, yoga, and components focused on helping youth release trauma and stress from their bodies.

As I watched Dr. Johnson’s eyes glow with love speaking of this place, I could think only about how beautiful this was to have the opportunity to sit in the presence of someone who continues to do the work to heal, not only for himself, but as a lighthouse in the storm shining out into his community to illuminate the way for others. Dr. Johnson’s voice, warmly reminiscent of safety and home, continued. “When you talk about the in-between, transitional spaces, there are stories we have in our life that we often don’t share, and those are the stories in this middle gray area. Do you share? Not share? How much do you share? Yet, those experiences are the most profound and powerful moments where we grow, gain a sense of who we are, and become able to talk about where we are, where we’ve been, learn to trust ourselves, and learn to trust in the future possibility that life has to offer. We can walk through it; I know this because evidence has shown me—I’ve done it before, I can do it again. When we hit those moments of gray, we survive by continuing to move through it, knowing we are where we are for a purpose. I believe I survived my suicide attempt for this purpose: no young person should ever have to feel that hopeless again, ever.”

And like the phoenix risen from ashes, Dr. Johnson is making true to his purpose by continuing to build a community where no young person has to walk that in-between.

Dr. Johnson is also an author; his recent book, “My Silent Story: The Gun that Saved My Life,” published under the name Jordan Johnson Chistsi, was released on March 31 and is available through Amazon. ©
INSPIRATION IN ACTION

Our alumni Inspiration in Action series connects current and former students and inspires our learners as they navigate the question, “What do I want to be when I grow up?” Alumni nominate themselves or others, share a biographical summary, and speak with a current class. Read along as we reconnect, asking former students “Who here inspired you and why did you choose Marshall?”

DEREK BROMME ’05 teaches low brass and music theory at the University of Minnesota—Duluth, and low brass at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. He earned a Master’s degree in trombone performance at Indiana University, and a DMA in bass trombone performance at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. He is an active soloist and clinician, having colorod a number of occasions with the UWS and UMD Wind Ensembles, serves as bass trombonist in Randy Lee’s Big Time Jazz Orchestra, and performs with the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra on tenor and bass trombone. He also traveled and recorded as the solo trombonist for Lorie Line.

“I was inspired by Ms. Durant, Ms. Ball, Dr. Weber, Dr. Nygaard, Mr. Mattson, Mr. Alexander, Ms. Waterhouse, Mr. Arntson, and Mr. Gould. As for my family, we were looking for a school with smaller class sizes and a more personal experience; we started in seventh grade and appreciated the ability to complete high school in the same school.”

MAKEELA MAGOMOLLA ’16 studied at Mankato State University for two years and graduated from UW-Madison with a Bachelor’s degree in Zoology and a certificate in African Cultural Studies. She volunteered at the Ngamba Chimpanzee Wildlife and Conservation Trust on Ngamba Island in Uganda, and helped care for orphaned chimpanzees, learned about green energy and eco-tourism, and had the opportunity to meet and spend time with Dr. Jane Goodall. That experience ignited a passion for volunteering, conservation, Non-Governmental Organization work (NGOs), and ecological tourism. She hopes to participate in two similar programs: Saving Vietnam’s Wildlife regarding pangolins and civets, and the LEO Africa Conservation Program in South Africa.

“The most inspirational teachers influencing my career path were Dr. Carter and Mr. Gabler. Both had true passions for teaching and a genuine love for science. Dr. Carter opened my eyes to how absolutely fascinating the biological world is, especially at the cellular level, while Mr. Gabler had us go to the woods and simply sit in silence, drawing what we saw. I really liked the smaller class sizes, block schedules, and close sense of community Marshall had to offer.”

MATT KOMATSU ’95 is a Colonel in the Alaska Air National Guard and serves as Commander of the 176th Mission Support Group. His group provides wartime and peacetime mission support of deployment operations, construction, facility maintenance, security, contracting, communications and information services. Col. Komatsu is also an award-winning writer. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Alaska, is an editor of War, Literature & the Arts, is creative director for the Alaska Literary nonprofit 49 Writer, and was a recipient of the 2017 Alaska Literary Award in Nonfiction.

“My running coaches Mr. Gilderman, Mr. Harnell, Mr. Johnson, and Ms. Moline were huge inspirations for me. Faculty members like Mr. Bernabo, Ms. Swing, and Mr. Sippel pushed me to approach academic work with an open and critical mind willing to encounter new material. My classmates were amazing as well. I was awed by their intellectual prowess, kindness, and drive to make the world a better place. My parents chose Marshall to provide me with an education that would best prepare me for my future.”

MANILAN HOULE ’12 serves as Assistant Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League Midwest overseeing regional communications, coalition building, advocacy campaigns, and incident response. As a tribal citizen of Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, he spent the last decade organizing and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, anti-poverty policy, foster care policy, and Indigenous rights. He was part of the 2020 Bronfman Convener’s Program with the Israel Policy Forum, and has worked for a range of progressive interests, including as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Midwest’s Progressive Outreach Director, the Policy and Organizing Director for OurFront Minnesota, and the Native American Engagement Director for the Minnesota DFL Party.

“Profe O’Brien will always have a special place in my heart; she worked tirelessly with me to achieve the most in her class and outside. Her devotion to the language and witty sense of humor made me want to do better. I remember touring the school and talking with Ms. Snyder, and ultimately chose Marshall after I was presented with a financial aid opportunity. This was the place where I would be challenged and supported to the highest level.”

ANDREW NELSON ’06 is a PhD candidate in the Japanese Linguistics track of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University. His interests are broad: On the technical end, he has studied syntax, semantics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and natural language processing; on the humanistic side, Japanese pop culture, early modern and modern Japanese history, Japanese literature, and translation. He will propose a dissertation topic later this year, possibly on an intellectual history of modern Japanese linguistic thought.

“Every teacher at Marshall ‘breathed’ into me the confidence and ability to recognize patterns, think critically, solve problems, conduct original research, and communicate ideas effectively. My family and I were looking for a place where curiosity was celebrated, an environment that fostered inquiry, creativity, and a spirit of challenge. When I visited Marshall for the first time, I showed the teachers a story I had written. Whereas the teachers at my old school dismissed the story, the Marshall teachers read it right there on the spot and expressed their enthusiasm. That encounter was indicative of the support and encouragement I found for the next eight years.”
“I was inspired by Dr. Nygaard, Mr. Beery, and Ms. Lemonholm. The three of them inculcated in us a life-long love of running. Marshall’s commitment to intentional inclusion, evidenced by the leaders of the newly expanded middle school; Ms. Snyder, Mr. Beery, and Ms. Lemonholm were a force of nature. Our small cohort of 40 students felt like extended family and a sense of community pervaded my years at Marshall.”

DR. AUDREY SEDERBERG ‘02
leads a computational neuroscience research group as part of the Medical Discovery Team for Optical Imaging and Brain Science at the University of Minnesota. Her primary research interest is in understanding the dynamics of large networks of neurons and how those dynamics relate to network structure; she uses mathematical tools to analyze and interpret the torrent of neural data made possible by modern technology with the aim of advancing our understanding of brain function and disease. Dr. Sederberg earned her BS in Physics from Harvey Mudd College and PhD in Physics from Princeton.

“Pervaded my years at Marshall.”

MARY BAUMGARTNER ‘14
attended Carleton College for a BA in Political Science with a minor in Educational Studies, then moved to Nebraska as a policy fellow at OpenSky Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank. That experience awakened a passion for fiscal policy as foundational to all social justice issues. She returned to Minnesota as the statewide organizer at the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition where she engaged with Minnesotans about state-level anti-poverty legislation. Baumgartner then accepted a position researching mobile food distribution programs for CHUM Food Shelf in Duluth. Using that research, she designed CHUM2GO, the food shelf’s food delivery program that works to increase food security and accessibility in the area.

“The beauty of the Marshall community was that nearly everyone inspired me; Profe O’Brien’s and Mr. Mattson’s abilities to help students develop strong technical foundations, Vinnie’s kindness and genuine interest, Dr. Nygaard’s and Mr. Mattson’s abilities to help students develop strong technical foundations in formal English while pushing us to broaden our worldviews. My parents chose Marshall because of the strong academics and student-teacher relationships, as well as my focus on college preparation. I was looking for a place where I could grow as a student, athlete, and member of my community.”

DEVEN BROMME ‘06
was born and raised in Duluth, and studied business and communication at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. After graduating college, he began working at his family’s assisted living facilities. At 25, Bromme chose a new path and pursued a career in the entertainment industry. He moved to Los Angeles and started working as a freelance film worker. After making a series of smaller films, he was given the opportunity to work on larger movies in the Atlanta, Georgia area, where he currently resides with his fiancé. Bromme is a union film worker under the Georgia Local 479 and is represented by the JPrevis Talent Agency.

“Was inspired by Dr. Nygaard, Profe O’Brien, and Chico Anderson. We chose Marshall because my father went to boarding school in the Cities and my mother went to Duluth East. Marshall was the compromise.”

Mary Baungartner

Deven Bromme

“To be a Hilltopper this day emphasizes the importance of intergenerational connections and the integral role our family and friends play in the lives of our students.”

ALUMNI

COMMUNITY EVENTS

REUNION
JULY 15 & 16, 2022
ALL CLASS MIXER
Friday, July 15 | 4:30-6:30pm
Join us for complimentary appetizers and beverages.
GOLDEN TOPPER LUNCHEON
Saturday, July 16 | 11:30am
For reunion classes of 50+ years!
MILESTONE EVENTS
‘12 | ‘02 | ‘92 | ‘82 | ‘72 | ‘62 | ‘52
Looking for your milestone class-specific schedule? RSVP and then watch your mailbox, inbox, and the alumni website!
marshallschool.org/alumni

WHAT’S THE SCOOP
MONDAY, JUNE 6 | 3:00PM
We welcome our class of ’21 back to campus for an afternoon of ice cream, reconnection, and fun with former classmates and Marshall faculty!

GRANDPARENTS/GRANDFRIENDS DAY
FRIDAY, MAY 27
Each year we invite grandparents or special friends of our students to spend a day on campus learning what it means to be a Hilltopper. This day emphasizes the importance of intergenerational connections and the integral role our family and friends play in the lives of our students.

FACEBOOK
Marshall School
@MarshallHilltoppers

YOUTUBE CHANNEL
Youtbe.com/DuluthMarshallSchool

ALUMNI WEBSITE
marshallschool.org/alumni

YOUTUBE CHANNEL
marshallschool.org
**NEWS & NOTES**

**IN MEMORIAM**

Robert Boisjoly ’45
Franklyn Chida ’47
William Crain ’47
Mary Lanaski ’50
Jerry O’Donnell ’51
James Conroy ’52
Rudolph Hable ’52
Eugene Kuyava ’57
William Whalen ’58
Russell Luhn ’59
Olgic Mickey ’64
Philip Tofodi ’64
Jon Wild ’64
George Gregorich ’66
Frederick Wright ’68
Barbara (LePak) Halerud ’69
Mark Michon ’69
Cynthia Snow ’70
Joseph Gingrath ’71
Patrick Neve ’73
Jacki Grandi ’74
Brian McCarthy ’75
Edward Sprenst ’75
Mary Catherine Holt ’77

**80’S**

Kathy Murphy ’82 writes, “Celebrating 37 years as a Critical Care and Hospice RN! I’ve worked for Woodwinds Hospital in Woodbury, Minnesota for 19 years as an ICU RN, Charge Nurse and Preceptor, and Pillars Hospice Home casually for 2 years.”

David Schifsky ’89 writes, “I have been selected as Deputy Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, a unique park spanning three Bay Area counties, and will also manage Muir Woods National Monument and Fort Point National Historic Site. Tya [Ward] and I are well in California, though always missing Duluth!”

Tya Ward ’89 writes, “I currently serve as Chief Philanthropy Officer at YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley [David and I] live with our two golden retrievers Rio and Maddle.”

**90’S**

Timothy Radke ’93 writes, “I am currently a Special Education Administrator in suburban Chicago. I am also working on my superintendent’s license and my doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies at Northern Illinois University.”

**HILLTOPPER HONORS**

**Distinguished Alumni Award**

**Outstanding Young Alumni Award**

**Global Citizenship Award**

**Athletic Hall of Fame**

**HONOR AWARDS**

The Hilltopper Honors Awards are a way to honor alumni who have excelled in their personal achievements, professional lives, or in service to society, and whose accomplishments have brought credit to the school.

The 2022 Hilltopper Honors Awards will be presented on campus in the fall. Nominate alumni by visiting the alumni website or contacting Jasen Wise, Director of Alumni Relations, at alumni@marshallschool.org or 216.727.7206 x112.

**WE’D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

With more than 5,000 alumni scattered around the world, it’s hard to keep track of the incredible things everyone is up to. We’re always looking for stories and updates of alumni to celebrate, and we need your help! You can call or email the Alumni Office with ideas for Hilltopper profiles, or visit our website at marshallschool.org/alumni to submit an update.

**GIVING MATTERS**

“My Marshall education was undoubtedly one of the most important contributors to my success in college. It was at Marshall that I learned how to problem solve and to think critically. It was where I learned to persevere and to ask questions. And it was there I learned to lead with empathy and gained the courage to advocate for myself.” Kaitlyn Snyder ’17 continued to use these skills at The Ohio State University where she received a Bachelor of Arts in sociology with a minor in biology and a certificate in diversity, equity, and inclusion. During her last two years, she worked as a nursing assistant in the OhioHealth organization where she supported all levels of care at five different hospitals in the city and was often called to provide care on Covid 19 isolation units. She currently works at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center’s Outpatient Care New Albany facility as a therapy aid while she prepares to apply to PT programs to seek a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy.

“I know that Marshall teachers are a core reason why I continue to have such fondness for the school. They are passionate and kind, and they hold their students to high standards.” Lori Durant is one of the teachers Kaitlyn credits for her love of reading. “Ms. Durant often gave us the opportunity to choose the books we wanted to read and the ways in which we wanted to explore them. She challenged us to collaborate and to be creative, by encouraging us to take ownership of our efforts, she gave us a certain level of autonomy that resulted in work that we are still really proud of and that we continue to talk about today - like the Greek mythology tabloid project or the Phantom of the Opera diorama.”

Another teacher who held Kaitlyn to high expectations was Kari Greenan. “As much as she challenged us, Madame Greenan is a teacher who always made me feel so confident in my ability to succeed. She provided endless encouragement, and she consistently let me know that she recognized the effort I put into her class. Moreover, she was always interested in my life outside of school and was someone I felt I could confide in.”

Kaitlyn supports the Topper Teacher Fund with a monthly gift because she wants to support the teachers who helped shape who she is today. “As a Marshall student, I felt loved, encouraged, and challenged by my teachers, and I have no doubt that my fellow alumni have similar memories. We will always be connected to the school and to the people who have made it such an impactful place, and I hope that other alumni will feel compelled to thank them by supporting the Fund.”

Marshall’s faculty are our greatest asset, and The Topper Teacher Fund was established to help retain and recruit amazing teachers. Join your classmates in making a recurring gift of $10/month, the equivalent of two coffees, to thank those teachers who made a difference in your life and to support the teachers who are inspiring Hilltoppers today. Please visit marshallschool.org/giving or use the enclosed envelope to make your gift.
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.