

A Letter From the Head of School

Dear Friend of Wye River,

This morning, as she arrived for duty, I overheard Anita, one of our very dedicated volunteers, say "This is the very best school I have ever worked in, and I have worked in a lot. And I mean that."

If you were here as she is, watching this wonderful team of administrators, staff and faculty keep classrooms humming, plates spinning and gears grinding, I know you would be equally impressed. Within these walls, and often outside them, this team of 19 employees creates and sustains a truly one of a kind learning environment in which students are valued, cared for, celebrated and supported. We have not earned the moniker "tiny but mighty" for naught.

Given all that is going on - a new MakerSpace, a Gala, Grandparents and Special Friends Day, guest speakers, Annual Fund appeals, Admissions Open Hous-

es, and of course classes, field trips, theatre production, you might not expect to receive a snail mail newsletter. It is a project we set aside a few years ago, based strictly on time and human resources needed to get it done.

With this issue, we are proud to return to producing a quarterly newsletter intended to engage our friends and, as we do for our students, provide you with multiple pathways to learning about WRUS. Our newly crafted **Strategic Plan Flight 2025**, calls for us to strengthen and expand our multiple paths of communication with you, our friend and stakeholder. As you can view at wyeriverupperschool.org/about/strategic-plan/, we are committed as a school to being well regarded and connected by providing a glimpse into how these special stories of our student's turnaround develop on a daily basis.

As you stay engaged with Wye River, I hope you will choose to be WRUS am-



Rae Bishop '20, Mason Gant '23, Cameron Kleiver '22, Josh Hasnen '20

bassadors within your own communities and networks. Your voice continues to be vital to our impact on the lives of our students. You may not be here like Anita, but you can help tell our stories, as she does. (continued on p 2)

Middendorf MakerSpace Opens Doors

On October 3, 2019, community leaders gathered together with students, parents, and faculty members to celebrate the unveiling of a progressive new learning space, the Middendorf MakerSpace at Wye River. In this space students will discover through innovation as they gain skills in robotics, 3D printing technology, culinary arts, craftsmanship, laser production techniques, and more. The Middendorf MakerSpace will engage students in real-world problem solving through project-based learning.

Founding Head of School Chrissy Aull said when referring to the space: "It's really about who we are as a school, who our students are, and how we teach in response to how they learn."

Alexa Seip, Chair of Wye River's Board of Trustees, echoed these sentiments, commenting, "The Middendorf Makerspace enables Wye River Upper School's students to engage in project-based learning that shows them the back door to science, chemistry, math, construction, collaborative projects, and teamwork... [For students] to be able to create something, touch it, hold

it, feel it, and use it is very important to the school, to the kids, and to the 21st Century."



Jay Truit '23 uses the laser cutter at Middendorf Maker Space

Alumni-Spotlight

Wye River takes great pride in celebrating the varied paths of its bright achievers. In this issue, we highlight one of our most talented musicians, Jesse Kirchner, class of '16. After graduating from Anne Arundel Community College with an Associate's Degree in music, Jesse was accepted with accolades into the Jazz Performance program at Towson. Not only does he go to school full time, but he maintains a hefty professional performance schedule and does paid studio work as well. Since graduating, Jesse has also taught guitar lessons and was a guest alumni teacher at Wye River, where he enjoyed fostering that same passion skillfully and with patience. Jesse shares, "What I love most about Wye River is their openness to alternative learning methods and their understanding that not everyone can be taught the same way." We are grateful that Jesse had the chance to flourish in his talents at Wye River, and trust he will remember us when!



Candlelit Gala Proves Major Success

Emma Beigel, Director of Development and Philanthropy

On Saturday November 2nd Wye River hosted A Candlelit Gala which was a smashing success. The generosity of community members, Trustees, and Wye River families joined together enabled us to raise over \$60,000 in net revenue – a record-breaking total for Wye River Upper School! This event highlighted the many paths alumni have chosen after Wye River. The event featured live music from The Marissa Muro Quartet, a large silent auction of over 25 items, raw oyster bar, Louis Vuitton bag and \$1,300 shopping spree raffle prize, meat carving, the area's best bites from local restaurants and a Glitz in a Glass station where guests played the game of chance by choosing a champagne glass in hopes of winning one

of three items of jewelry donated by local jewelers. We are so grateful to all who supported, attended, donated or just spread the word about the Gala. Because of you, this gala was our best ever, both in terms of fun had and dollars raised! Those proceeds will go towards:

- providing unique real-world experiences that bring students out of the classroom and into our community,
- making possible generous financial awards that open Wye River's doors to students from all walks of life,
- investing in project-based learning opportunities that allow students to engage in authentic inquiry,
- supporting the Executive Functioning needs of our students, and more!

Chrissy Aull, Wye River Upper School's Founding Head of School shares: "We are proud to know that a record number of parents, Trustees, staff and friends chose to dedicate time and treasure to come together in celebration of our students and our good work."

Fostering Strong Habits

Matthew Cowan, Director of Education

If you walk into an advisory classroom at Wye River Upper School this year you will see students contemplating and working on something we have nick-named "the green sheet." The green sheet is an evidence-based tool designed specifically to engage our students in scholarly habits of mind and initiate their metacognitive processes and mindfulness. A key aspect of the green sheet is the coaching questions. These coaching questions are open-ended, non-judgmental, and designed to prompt self-evaluation and reflection. They can be as simple as "What do I need to work on today?" and "Who can help me?" to "What has been my biggest challenge this week?" and "What do I need to do over the weekend to be prepared for next week?"

Metacognition has been described by some educational psychologists as "thinking about thinking." This can be further broken down to include cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation. Self-appraisal, planning, and evaluation are all typically understood as metacognitive components that fall into one of the above categories (Lai, 2011). Through coaching questions we can help students cultivate these skills and in turn experience greater success in academics and life.

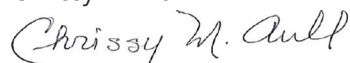
At home we can continue to foster mindfulness by building off of the green sheet prompts or coaching students through new prompts. The important thing to remember is that coaching questions are way to guide students' thinking, there is no right or wrong response, and we want

A Letter From the Head of School (cont.)

Your endorsement is invaluable as we work to honor the goals of Flight 2025. If you know of someone who should know more about Wye River, whether a prospective student or donor or community partner, I ask you to be the difference. Please consider calling us to arrange for a tour, a talk, a connection.

I am very proud of this faculty and staff- they are the ones who decided to relaunch this newsletter. Each of them brings their own talents, energy, optimism and dedication to enabling our student's success. This inaugural newsletter goes out in honor of them. Thank you for reading it cover to cover and, once you are done, think about passing it on to someone who ought to know.

Sincerely,
Chrissy M. Aull



Founding Head of School



Rick Maddox, Chrissy Aull, and Lauren Maddox celebrate Wye River at this year's Gala



WRUS Trustee Clay Railey, WRUS Board Chair Alexa Seip, and Trustee

Women Engineers

Kimberleigh Garcia,
Director of Enrollment Management and
Communication

Lisa Walton, one of our valued Science instructors, recently took some young women on the Explore Engineering weekend at Sweet Briar, a private women’s liberal arts college, and her alma mater. Thirty high school girls from all over the United States were tasked with developing a “spooky” Halloween device operated with microcomputers and sensors. After being introduced to the basics of circuitry, coding, and workshop safety, the students worked in groups of two to create their own unique inventions. In an afternoon, the groups were able to successfully execute high-quality Halloween decorations including Jack-in-the-Box skeletons operated with light sensors and motion-activated vibrating skulls!

Lisa shares, “One of my favorite things about Wye River Upper School is our emphasis on experiential learning. At this [engineering] event, they get to act like college students for the weekend, and they have an im-

mersive, authentic, experience, where they’re working in the engineering lab doing hands-on STEM activities that would have never been possible for them to engage in otherwise. I really love how these students come away with a new excitement for their futures and start thinking about careers and possibilities beyond high school.”

In addition to earning her Master’s of Science in education last year at Johns Hopkins University, Lisa has had extensive training in inquiry and project-based learning and fosters a love for real-life application all year through local partnerships with Shore Rivers and The Maryland Bird Conservation and by connecting science to the medical field where she worked previously. She is already working with students to prepare them for the Science Olympiad next Spring, where they are eager to repeat their strong showing in a wide range of events in topics such as engineering, earth science, biology, and chemistry. We are grateful for Lisa’s dedication to our students in the classroom and on these weekend enrichment opportunities!



Lindsay Myers, Emma Meenen, and Kayla Peri enjoy their time at Sweet Briar’s “Explore Engineering” weekend

of Mind

to encourage them to think deeply and plan strategically, which may require some feedback. As affirmed by researchers like Carol Dweck (2011), students who are given feedback that reaffirms their effort and process are more likely to embrace new and novel challenges in the future. When using coaching questions with students, be sure to celebrate the growth-mindset and look for teachable moments in mistakes. Over time, students will develop more resilience and be more prepared to take on the challenges that lie ahead of them. I encourage you to employ a coaching mindset and use these questions when working with you students on homework or during dinnertime conversation:

What made today a success?

What steps did you take to make today successful?

What could you do differently next time?

How did you work through your challenges today?

Where did you place your greatest effort?

What will you do to improve your work?

What could you do today to make tomorrow a success?

References:

Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books, 2016.

Lai, E. R. (2011). *Metacognition: A Literature Review*. Pearson Assessments Research Reports.

2020 Commencement Challenge!

The 2020 Commencement Challenge has a simple formula: 2,020 donations by the 2020 Commencement Ceremony on May 20th. Throughout the 2019-20 academic year, students, parents, school staff, leadership, family, friends, and our surrounding community will join together to accomplish this ambitious goal. This act of collective generosity will open doors for our bright students and share our Wye River pride. Donations of time, items or funds all count towards the 2,020 donations.

See inserted pamphlet to contribute.

...because not all great minds think alike.

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