

FOCUS

Editorial Issue

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Welcome Art Hall!

by Emilia Weinberg '14

After weeks of scouting and interviewing candidates, the Friends' Central community had the pleasure of welcoming Art Hall as our new Upper School Principal. Coming from the Greenhill School in Dallas, where he is currently the director of Equity and Inclusion, Mr. Hall will start at FCS on July 1st, 2014. In the days following the announcement, students and teachers alike expressed their confidence in the committee's choice and their excitement about integrating Mr. Hall into our community. Student

Council president, Matt Strahan '14, was particularly impressed with Art Hall's commitment to students' interests, saying "Mr. Hall is going to be a phenomenal addition to FCS. I think what set him apart and distinguishes him is his ability to relate to students. When he visited he talked about how at his current school Greenhill he made a point to say that he was the Dean of Students and not the Dean of Discipline. He also talked about a required balance and 'equality' between the three A's [arts, athletics and academics]."

Beyond this, Mr. Hall focuses much of his work on diversity training. In the past, he has done student workshops on the n-word, created LGBT support groups, and worked to make conservative students feel comfortable in a liberal school. While, unfortunately, my time at Friends' Central will not overlap with Mr. Hall's, I am impressed by how positively he

has been received at the school.

FCS is still in a period of transition. We are still developing, growing, and improving all with the intent of becoming an institution focused on the Quaker principles but fully integrated with the modern world. I am confident that Mr. Hall is fully equipped to help FCS reach that goal. The Focus staff was so excited to hear the news about Mr. Hall and could not wait to talk to him. I was lucky enough to have the chance to chat with Mr. Hall to learn more about him and further introduce him to our Upper School community.

What initially attracted you to Friends' Central? Why do you think you are a good fit for the school?

Over the past few years, my wife and I have had limited exposure to Quaker methodology and practice. Most of our exposure has come through diversity work we have done with people who were from Quaker schools or who were familiar with Quaker values. My family and I are spiritual people;

We decided to do things differently for our March "Editorial Issue". After meeting with Mr. Calder, who writes editorials for the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Focus staff set out researching topics of their own choice, formulating their own opinions, and using what they found to write their own editorial pieces. Ranging from Feminism to Politics at Friends' Central, each writer brought a unique, thoughtful article. Our goal for this issue is to allow our writers to speak their minds while also inciting interesting and meaningful discussion on campus. These opinions are the writer's alone and do not reflect the Focus staff's thoughts. If anyone has any questions or concerns about any of the articles featured in this issue, feel free to contact Emilia (eweinberg@friendscentral.org), Peter (pdissinger@friendscentral.org), or the writer.

we always told ourselves that if the opportunity presented itself, we would jump at the chance to be part of a community that has such a strong belief in what is equitable and what is kind. Friends' Central is a two-fold win for my family...it is a strong Quaker school and it is in the great city of Philadelphia!

What are some of your goals as incoming Upper School principal? What are you most excited about?

My number one goal is to get to know everyone in the Upper School, seriously. I truly believe that effective leadership is realized when there is an understanding and

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Cheating at Friends' Central

by Peter Dissinger '14

In September of 2012, the *New York Times* exposed a massive cheating ring at one of the premier public schools in New York City, Stuyvesant High School. Students admitted that they very frequently helped each other do well on tests through a variety of elaborate cheating systems. During a class discussion in Philosophy on the ethics of cheating, in which we read this article by Vivian Lee about Stuyvesant, many of my classmates said that they believed cheating was an issue at Friends' Central. In reflecting on the conversation we had, I feel confident saying that Friends' Central is not experiencing a cheating epidemic nor do we have a cheating "problem." In fact, I would be willing to argue the opposite - that Friends' Central generally does a good job of addressing this issue and succeeds in preventing large amounts of cheating. For instance, the English department is required to discuss academic integrity with all students at the

start of every school year. We have an honor statement which explicitly asks students to have complete integrity and our community has a lot of discussions about the issue of cheating.

However, it has been my experience at Friends' Central that our zero tolerance policy against cheating is sometimes flexible, specifically in classes where tests are the standard means of assessment. I have seen students get away with "wavering eyes" on tests, directly cheating without consequence. I have felt at times that teachers do not do enough to discourage the cheating in their classes.

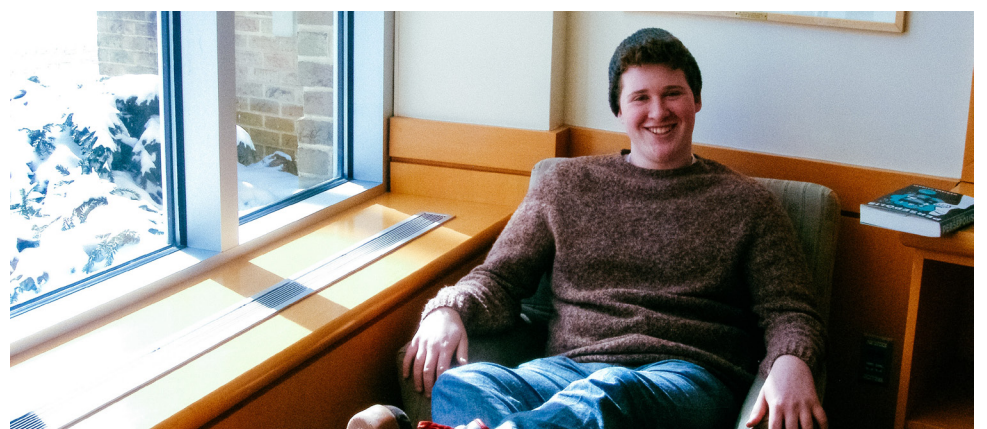
To investigate and understand the faculty's perspective on the issue of cheating at FCS, I went to a variety of Upper School teachers and spoke with them about their experiences with academic dishonesty. One of my current teachers, Dr. Patterson, says that he has not had too many instances with

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Why We Need Feminism

by Stefan Sultan '15

Why do we need feminism in the world today? After all, it is 2014. *Roe v. Wade* was decided 40 years ago and it has been nearly a hundred years since the 19th amendment, which guaranteed women's suffrage, was passed. Women are running



Fortune 500 companies such as GM, IBM, and PepsiCo. There are three female associate justices on the Supreme Court and women are in charge of some of the most powerful countries in the world including South

Korea, Brazil, and Germany; furthermore, a woman is poised to become the candidate for Democratic Party for the upcoming election of 2016. So why do we need feminism? All you need to do is type in "why feminism is" into Google and look at the results. The top three words Google recommends to

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Politics at FCS: Why It Comes From the Teachers

by Austin Margulies '16

You can learn a lot about Friends' Central from trying to sell it to someone else. For most of us, we will have this opportunity at least once or twice through SAC tours, other admissions events, or just telling a friend about the school. Recently, while partaking in a student meeting with a prospective principal candidate, our group was asked what we liked most about Friends' Central. The room went silent. After a continued silence, and some further prodding by the candidate, a student raised their hand and answered, "Of course, there are a lot of great things about Friends' Central. But I think what really sets us apart are the exceptional relationships between students and teachers."

I find this statement quite accurate. At Friends' Central, students have the ability to easily approach teachers and receive legitimate support and help from them. Yes, some teachers give annoying assignments, and yes, you might subtweet them once a week, but here at Friends' Central we do love our teachers. The incredible educators we are taught by help us to appreciate and enjoy the subject matter of the class. Our teachers genuinely care about their classes, students and course content. This enthusiasm rubs off, as our teachers have that ability to influence us in a number of positive ways. This influence, however, can also spread ideals that exist outside of the academic realm.

Friends' Central is a liberal school. There's no sense in denying it. For the 2008

election, a middle school mock election found Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate, to be the winner by a 90% margin. In 2012, our Club Fair proudly posted signs to join FCS' Students for Obama Chapter. There's nothing wrong with these things, as students at Friends' Central have the right to express themselves in a safe and reasonable manner. Although the student body tends to take a liberal stance on politics, especially on social issues, it is the teachers who ultimately have control over this environment.

When the teachers use their influential ability to facilitate a biased environment, I believe we are contradicting the mission statement of our school. And, unfortunately, that is the situation we have found ourselves in. When you can see a "Barack Obama for President" sign in class or when a classroom has a "Friends don't let friends vote Republican" button, it is clear where this unfair bias stems from.

So how do the teachers make our school liberal without direct intention? It is the constant exposure to liberal ideas. In the spring of last school year, Benjamin Fogel



our school that promote a liberal bias. He discussed buttons, as well as other apparel presented by teachers. However, none of the open references to democratic and liberal ideas hung around our school have been removed! In addition to the clear liberal stance of the faculty, Friends' Central is not a place where dissenting opinions (conservatives) are listened to. In discussion with other conservative and liberal students, the consensus is clear. Conservative opinions are usually not welcomed at Friends' Central either by students or teachers.

Another channel through which liberal

ideas are advertised at Friends' Central is through the Upper School curriculum. From my perspective, there is a bias against capitalism in the history department, where students are exposed to comparisons between economic and political systems. In my own experiences, teachers can be quick to point out the flaws in the capitalist system, an economic form normally associated with the Republican party. I am not saying that teachers praise socialism or communism, simply that we should equally weigh the pros and cons of our economic system. Further, while our school promotes peace through its Quaker values, the school community never talks about our military as a completely necessary part of our country. In multiple classrooms, there are visual commentaries about the "negative" spending of our federal budget on our military. Although the Quaker testimonies do support a pacifist approach, that does not mean that today's military should be slandered to students through generalized statements.

None of these clear issues has ever been addressed outside of the student body, and the teachers have shown no inclination to change. It is for this reason that I express to the faculty their responsibility to help facilitate a change. We should ask ourselves, are we giving students and teachers alike a legitimate chance to express all of their political views?

If you would like to ask questions, or simply comment on what I have discussed, I am all ears. Please reach me at amargulies@friendscentral.org ❖

On Early Recruitment of NCAA Athletes

by Sophie MacFarlane '15

Twitter, Instagram and even Snapchat? These social networks may be used amongst friends, but more and more high school athletes are using these as means to communicate with college coaches. With the speed of recruitment increasing rapidly every year, students are being approached not only by email but through Direct Messages on Twitter or "likes" on Instagram. A new NCAA rule even states that coaches will now be able to communicate with their prospects over Snapchats as well. This new phenomenon not only reflects on the power of technology, but also on the changes in recruitment. Being a high school athlete myself, I have seen many friends go through this recruitment process. This process isn't solely based on school visits and exchanged emails anymore. With the help of technology, coaches have an easier way into an athlete's personal life.

Now, I see how this could be helpful. Obviously coaches should have the opportunity to get to know their recruits on a personal level, but should that really come from technology? We've been told many times that anything we put on the internet is permanent and anything has the possibility to reflect badly on us, but with this new recruitment process, that seems so much more significant. Many of my teammates have deleted their Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook out of fear that their various social networks might make them "unrecruitable." Also, with technology like Snapchat, where photo messages are quickly deleted, how can the NCAA be certain that coaches and athletes are following the NCAA rules? Coaches could hypothetically reach out to players directly much earlier than allowed, and no one would have any way to prove that they had. Snapchat could be used to create bigger

problems than the ones already existing.

One of those existing problems is that recruiting is consistently happening for athletes at a much younger age. Recently, ABC News posted an article titled "14-Year-Old Texas Junior High Quarterback Commits to LSU." How is a 14-year-old supposed to know the school that he or she wants to attend four years down the road? Opinions



This pressure on athletes to make their decisions early is frightening to me. How can 9th graders know where they want to end up in four years? That's why you have four years to figure it out! Although coaches are not allowed to email you back until September 1st of your junior year, that doesn't mean that athletes like myself are unaware of the schools that are interested in us. Colleges may email our coaches saying that they are interested and ask our coaches to arrange a visit for us. Additionally, girls and boys alike are verbally committing to schools at a younger age. A verbal commitment is an agreement that you will attend and play for a certain school. It is not binding; however, it is looked down upon in the athletic world to back out of a verbal commitment.

The sad fact is, there is no real way to change the recruitment process. If coaches want to get the best athletes in the nation, they have to recruit early, because everyone else is doing it. Coaches can't just stand by and let the best players be snatched up by the schools that decide to recruit younger athletes, so they all jump in on it. It's unfortunate that students are being asked to make decisions so early on, but I don't see any quick fix for the problem. ❖

From Art Hall on previous page

knowledge of the people who are looking to you as a community leader. I am most excited about learning how Quaker values enhance an independent school education. Friends' Central has an outstanding national reputation and I am sure that the image of the school is due, in part, to the its strong core values and community pillars.

In what areas do you think Friends' Central could improve?

I think it is too soon for me to answer that question. There is so much that is about to happen in the community. I will say that I will be in constant observation of scheduling, 1:1 computing, MS/US transition challenges, and other vital school programs as I move through the 2014-15 year.

Do you think iPads will be a good addition to Friends' Central's curriculum?

Absolutely! Like all new things, there will be some challenges at the beginning; however, I truly believe that technology can enhance the classroom experience. Are there other options besides the iPad that can work, yes; but the school has decided that the iPad will allow students and teachers to work effectively in a world that shrinks daily due to the connect nature of our lifestyles.

How do you plan to incorporate the Quaker values into your work at Friends' Central?

The concept of being comfortable with silence is going to be first and foremost, with regards to my work at Friends' Central. I value the ability to sit and reflect on what was said/voiced or what is about to be said/voiced. My professional life has been enriched by comfort with silence, and I plan on continuing to make that a strong part of my identity during my tenure at Friends' Central. ❖

Why Everyone is Included in Diversity

by Isabel Nardi '14

Often, after people find out that I am involved in the club Students for Diversity, their immediate follow up question is, “Why? You’re not diverse, you’re white.” In response, I say that while my skin color is perhaps one of the most obvious aspects of my makeup, it is only one part of what makes me unique.



So what is diversity? For me, diversity is an umbrella word, defining varieties of ideas and opinions, races, socioeconomic statuses, political views and many other

ideologies. Diversity emphasizes an awareness and respect of differences among individuals. Although I am gung-ho about diversity work, I still have difficult moments. I frequently wonder how can we celebrate the positivity surrounding diversity among us while also acknowledging and managing the differences that are present?

There are always moments for us to learn from other people’s perspectives, both the positive and negative, which deserve equal focus and dedication. Earlier this year, I hit a roadblock in trying to think about my involvement in exploring diversity and I kept asking myself: how can I lead discussions on diversity if I am still new to it as well?

I posed this very question to Eddie Moore, who visited FCS earlier this year, and he provided me with a simple yet exquisite answer, one that most definitely re-fueled me. He said, “If you continue to ask yourself questions then you are meant to stay involved with diversity work. It is when the questions stop coming that you have to reevaluate.” Change takes time and FCS is working towards that change in our diversity program and I am thrilled to be a part of it. ❖

Do it for the Transcript?

by Jess Miller '15

One of the things in my life I am most grateful for is my opportunity to attend Friends’ Central School. I feel that FCS is amazing at guiding me to find many routes to learn and grow. In my opinion, education should be about preparing for success throughout my life. I should be choosing courses that will help me become the person that I want to be rather than just the one colleges want to see. However, I often consider taking classes and joining clubs just to appear impressive and well-fit for a college, instead of pursuing my genuine interests. I sometimes feel as if I am losing sight of what I look for in the true purpose of my high school education.

Near the end of each high school year, students anxiously select courses to best map out their remaining academic years at Friends’ Central. We have options to take advanced courses, history and literature electives, and the many paths available in

is also a responsibility that can be a major cause of pressure.

14 out of 20 students surveyed at Friends’ Central responded that they have chosen at least one course during their four years of high school because of how they believe a college would perceive the selection on their transcript. At times, students like myself sacrifice our personal interests, whether by taking advanced courses to appear impressive, picking a science over an art to seem more serious in academic work, or taking leadership roles in clubs to look involved. Sometimes students will choose courses that are a level ahead of their abilities, which requires extreme preparation for them outside of school. Students may have to dedicate their summers to spend time in the classroom, preparing to jump to that higher level math or language course. I think it is important for us to be asking if this is what we really want for ourselves.

I feel that students need to trust their instincts more when deciding what to study in high school. If you have motivation to challenge yourself in a specific area of study, then you should take the initiative and pursue your interests on an advanced level.

These four years are my only chance to take interesting courses offered at Friends’ Central’s high school. I don’t want to kill my time with courses that I’m using just to make myself a fulfillment of potential college expectations. Rather, I want to take courses that will lead me to be happier and more confident in myself as a student and part of the community.

Sometimes it isn’t worth dropping that art course for a science. If you could be content, confident, and dedicated in that arts course, then pick it. Isn’t that supposedly what colleges are looking for anyway? ❖



the science , math, and language departments to complete our schedules. Personally, I debated between taking biology or physics in my junior year and am considering taking two math courses in my senior year. We also can choose to join clubs, art programs, and athletics as extra curricular activities. One of the great powers of being students at FCS is our ability to design our own curriculum. It is in our hands to choose the courses that will help us meet our personal desires and needs. We are fortunate to have this opportunity; however, designing our curricula

From Cheating on front page

plagiarism or with cheating on quizzes or tests. “The ‘roaming eye’ thing is pretty easy to stop with a look or the old fashioned ‘eyes on your paper’ comment.” When there is evidence of blatant copying, Dr P added, then “it isn’t too hard to call it out or administer consequences. But when cases are less clear, it



can be a tough call that can quickly spill into a confrontation. I think teachers find those very hard to manage and maybe even err on the side of avoiding the conflict.” Clearly, what may seem like a lax attitude is sometimes an inability to justifiably act.

Ms. Novo, both Dean of Faculty and a longtime English teacher, points out that the “cheating problem” is less of an issue for literature and history courses, where students write more papers and must come up with “their own authentic material.” She believes that in the sciences and math, where tests are more predominant and more factual, cheating may be more prevalent. Ms. Novo pointed out that the disparity is a result of the different ways in which courses are naturally taught. From our discussion, I came to the conclusion that if Friends’ Central is going to change its mindset around cheating, it needs to be a community-wide effort led by the faculty and administration.

I believe that there is a sufficient effort to stop plagiarism at Friends’ Central. The policies in place in the history and English departments are stated clearly and the consequences in place prevent students from overtly cheating. However, I don’t really feel that there is a uniform set of consequences in response to cheating on tests at FCS.

From Feminism on front page

Throughout the world women are still second-class citizens. In the United States, one in every five women will be raped, and less than half of those rapes, 46%, will actually be reported. In the United States at least 822 women are raped every day and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the number reaches over 1,000. In the United Arab Emirates, it is even a crime to be raped. Thousands of women from Brazil to the Sudan are forced to undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) every year. In America, a white woman is paid seventy seven cents for every dollar a man makes for exactly the same job; for black women that number is 64 cents, and for hispanics 53 cents. In Saudi Arabia, women still aren’t allowed to drive, and don’t even think about their leaving their house with their faces uncovered.

So why do we need feminism? We need it because of people like Pat Robertson, the host of the 700 Club on the Christian Broadcasting Network, who said, “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to

There is a “cheat and get a zero” policy for tests (only for first offenders, according to the Upper School faculty handbook), but it generally seems that cheating is individually and subjectively dealt with. Further, while teachers are currently expected to address any issues of cheating they see, it is clear that there is a stigma against talking about

cheating. In accordance with our Quaker values and on the recommendation of another current teacher, I believe that teachers should feel comfortable voicing their concerns to students whom they perceive to be cheating in their class. These discussions should not be framed as accusations, but merely open dialogues. If the situation worsens, a teacher then should be expected to warn the student of future consequences if a student’s habits do not markedly change. In addition, students should feel safe reporting potential cheating incidents to teachers. By feeling that teachers would act on their concerns students would not feel pressured to directly address other students, which would eliminate any concerns that we would be adopting a “tattle-tale” policy.

It is my opinion that we need to renew our focus on academic integrity, encouraging teachers and students alike to discuss instances of cheating at FCS and establishing clear consequences for students who cheat. As Friends’ Central welcomes in a new wave of technology and a new Upper School principal, we should be especially focused on becoming more active in addressing any situations of cheating we see. ❖

leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.” Because even Sigmund Freud thought that “we must not allow ourselves to be deflected by the feminists who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal.” We need feminism because a female state legislator in Michigan was banned from speaking on the House floor for using the word vagina in a debate about abortion. We need it because a women who stood for 11 straight hours to protect a woman’s right to choose, without taking a break to eat, drink, go to the bathroom, or even lean on anything, was belittled on social media and even called a “spineless b***h.”

We need feminism because no one should be asking why we need feminism. We need feminism because it is not “wrong,” “bad,” or “bulls**t.” We need feminism because, as Cheris Kramarae once put it, “Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings.” We need feminism because when equality is not guaranteed for some, how can it be guaranteed for all? ❖

Learning Differences at FCS: Then and Now

by Grant Calder

“Learning differences,” “ADHD” and “special needs” are all relatively new terms. The earliest mention of ADHD appears in the New York Times database in an article entitled “Kids who can’t sit still” from 1991. References to learning differences, also referred to as “disabilities” in the Times database go back to the 1980s. Before that, one gets the impression that students with different learning styles or particular deficits were generally left to struggle along on their own.

Not so at Friends’ Central. By 1884, in its fourth decade of operation, the school was already offering support services for students with special needs. In fact, they had a “Special Department” in both the “Intermediate” (Middle) School and “Central” (Upper) School.

The 1884-1885 school information booklet explains that a “department has been organized [in the Upper School] for the benefit of those who desire to take special studies only; to pay particular attention to certain branches which will better prepare them to enter the graded department, or who, from sickness, want of opportunity or ability, have difficulty in keeping pace with their classes.” The phrasing is strikingly progressive for an era in which corporal punishment was standard practice in the vast majority of American schools. “The studies are elective,” the booklet continues, “and it is the intention to combine the advantage of a small school with those of a strictly graded one.”

The term “graded” refers not to the grading of assignments but to the organization of

the school into formal grades: sixth, seventh, eighth and so on. In the 19th century, most kids attended “ungraded schools.” We typically refer to them as “one room schoolhouses.” Pupils of all ages were grouped together in a single class.

In the Middle School, “Experience has shown that some pupils cannot adapt themselves to the large classes of the graded schools. In consequence thereof, a special department has been organized..., in which pupils of both sexes receive much individual instruction from the teachers.” The phrase “pupils of both sexes” suggests that not only was individual instruction unusual but so was its availability to boys and girls.

“Differentiated instruction,” another current educational catch phrase, turns out to be nothing new. One hundred and thirty years ago, Friends’ Central teachers were working both one-on-one and in the traditional classroom setting with a wide range of developmental and content levels. Students could spend time in the special department and then, whenever they were ready, they would be “promoted from the lower to the higher grades of each branch.” The continuing prevalence of ungraded schools in that era meant that even at the graded ones there was less concern with students’ ages than with their academic achievement levels when it came to placement.

At Friends’ Central today, we may use new terms to describe the learning styles of the students we serve and new tools to provide the support they need, but in so doing we are simply reaffirming a long-held and enduring commitment to a diverse community of learners reaching back, well over a century, to the school’s early decades. ❖

Why We Shouldn’t Stereotype Africa

by Julia Sterm ‘15

As a student body completely tuned into the media and world press, we constantly hear about pressing issues in Africa. Whether it concerns conflicts over basic resources, famine, political unrest, civil wars, instability, human right violations, or displaced populations, what we believe about this continent is largely negative. In truth, these crises are all very real. Many countries suffer under oppressive dictatorships, exploited labor, and widespread hunger and

significant everyday challenges.

After this trip, I was quick to assume that my experience in Ghana would be fairly similar, but that was a major misconception. We woke up, ate lunch, and fell asleep to the call to prayer. In the middle of the night we were roused by the music of a traditional funeral procession, and on Sundays we visited a local church where we watched as the community joined together to sing gospel, clap and dance. We taught in a primary school where the 6th grade classroom ranged from ages eight to twenty five, all equally eager



r u here now?

by Rose Gendelman ‘15

If you look around at the tables during lunch, it’s a pretty unfortunate sight. People sitting together, not speaking, answering texts, looking at Instagram, scrolling through Twitter, and taking Snapchats. Although the cell phone policy was a necessity, this has gotten a little out of hand. I mean, if you really observe the people sitting together, half the time they talk and half the time they’re staring at their screens. So I’m wondering, when every student has an iPad next year, will the cafeteria be silent? Will we just play flappy bird and live-tweet all day?

Even though technology has proved itself as a necessity in education, it takes the social aspect of school and turns it into social media. It seems like people can’t enjoy themselves without their phones to document every second of their lives. So, as ridiculous as it may sound, when you really think about it,

are you here, now?

Next time you’re in the cafeteria, take a minute to look around and ask yourself if you’re too caught up in what someone Instagrammed yesterday to talk to your best friend, or better yet, to make a new friend. Cell phones, iPads, tablets, and computers are necessary for school work, but don’t let them be necessary every second of every day. Be here now. ❖



disease. But it also goes without saying that these nations are not defined simply by their harsh conditions. The Congo is not just a place of destitution; Nigeria is not solely conflict over oil revenues; Rwanda is not just genocide. And while recent events might say otherwise, Egypt is more than just its political chaos.

When I first stepped foot in Arusha, Tanzania, all the images I’d previously seen through the media came alive and danced before my eyes. The bustling crowd of people, the smoky air, the cramped car ride, the night sky. As a crowd of white students with hefty travel bags, we stuck out like sore thumbs. The first glimpse of the village where we stayed in the morning proved incredibly surreal - small homes made of logs and cement sitting alongside the dirt path, little kids carrying babies on their backs, women trekking great distances with buckets of water on their heads, men traveling by moped, and chickens walking around at will. However, when we were living with the Maa-sai tribe later, just a few hours south of Kilimanjaro, I discovered something the media could never have prepared me for. From witnessing the sacrifice of a goat to participating in Emanyatta, a traditional celebration of the warrior stage, I got a glimpse of an immensely rich culture so vastly different from my own. These people live without basic resources that we often take for granted-working toilets, electricity, clean food, and even access to clean water. Facing their adversity with strength and optimism like no other, these people aren’t hardened by their

to participate. For a while I’d been thinking it felt like I was a visitor in another world, but teaching in a classroom fostered a connectedness that I never expected. Every day we were greeted with joy, laughter, and hugs. And the day that one of my students, Matthew, pulled out “Miss Rumphius” (my favorite childhood book) to read during English, I couldn’t help but let the tears fall. These small similarities made me realize how linked we really are. It took little effort to recognize what great potential these students have, with their will to look past their odds and striving to learn and prosper. Yet they are denied the same opportunities we have because of where they live and their limited access to education.

We are quick to clump together the 55 nations under just one label of abject poverty and constant strife. However, from east to west and north to south, these 55 different nations all offer their own richness in culture, tradition, language, and diversity. Africa as a continent is not just a place with elephants, wildlife, or “cute little African children”- it’s a home to a host of different histories and tales, astonishing tribal lives, and astounding stories of strength, perseverance, and optimism. When we look beyond the threshold of what makes a particular nation unstable or perilous, what is found are small communities built upon trust, independence, enormous cultural gifts, and a true yearning to learn, progress, and prevail. ❖

The Revival of *Real*

by Julia Barr '15

People come in all shapes and sizes. But is the same true for beauty? We know that the intelligence that it takes to be a biochemist is different from the intelligence a historian requires; the athleticism a wrestler needs is different from the athleticism it takes to be a soccer player or a dancer. As a society we are comfortable with the idea that some things are relative. But are we comfortable with the relativity of beauty?

I sometimes feel that body image issues have become somewhat of a cliché. The media’s influence on how we define beauty and judge ourselves has been around for years. That’s a problem. By feeding into the system, we have helped it to grow. The more it becomes a part our daily lives, the less likely we are to take action against it.

But we do not necessarily become numb to the effects of being constantly flooded with pictures of people that most of us will never look like. While men certainly fall victim to the same unachievable expectations of what are deemed “good looks,” I, personally, can only speak to to the influence that the media and pop culture have had on females. As a girl, I have been conditioned since the time I was playing with Barbie dolls to want to look like Barbie dolls, with the reality being that I will never be able to. What’s worse, as a society we’ve become conditioned to

accept our inferiority as our fault, not the fault of those who created the image of “Barbie-perfect”.

It is easy to become absorbed in the negative environment that has been created surrounding this issue, but it is also important to recognize all of the powerful



movements dedicated to repairing the damage. In 2004, Dove began the Real Beauty campaign, targeting the “need for a wider definition of beauty, after...the definition of beauty had become limiting and unattainable.” Since then, through photos, advertisements, videos, and other means of social

media, Dove has challenged people to rethink their definition of beauty, asking people to approach themselves and others in a way that celebrates our differences and our greatest insecurities. One of their earlier videos, *The Evolution of Beauty*, depicts a “normal” woman who, through the use of makeup and digital retouching, is transformed into a face unrecognizable as her own, but appropriate to be seen on billboards and advertisements. The video

ends with the message “no wonder our perception of beauty is distorted.” It is shocking to see just how much the image of this average woman can be distorted, and it is as much a message to those responsible for this image, as it is to us on the receiving end.

This January, popular clothing brand Aerie initiated the Aerie Real campaign. Following the same mantra as Dove, the campaign features “un-supermodel” models and photos without digital retouching. Considering the product that they are selling, this was certainly a bold move. Although I have heard some complain that the models are not that drastically different from those of companies like Victoria’s Secret, the message itself still holds incredible power and encouragement. Instead of building an empire on an image of untouchable perfection, this message encourages a definition of beauty that is realistic, but just as beautiful.

As many have concluded, our definition and standards of beauty do not need to be redefined, but rather expanded to better encompass and define the 21st century woman. I don’t think that all of pop culture and social media is yet brave enough to completely stop the digital retouching and replace supermodels with “normal” girls and women, but I do think that society is beginning to become tired of these standards and is ready for a change. ❖

How I See BuzzFeed

by Saiorse Hahn '15

Buzzfeed is among the latest and greatest in websites for entertainment, news, and especially procrastination. Created in New York in 2006 by Jonah Peretti, this social news and media website has taken over online entertainment. It is essentially a website of videos, articles, lists, and quizzes in all different categories ranging from international news, to food, to the top ten celebrity tweets from the past week. I absolutely adore it.

Adore might be the wrong word, considering that BuzzFeed is the sole reason for any late assignment I’ve ever turned in. But, nevertheless, it is an incredible creation. It is run by an employed team that creates, writes, and posts all of the articles and lists, all updated almost everyday. On any given day on BuzzFeed you can find out what kind of weird subculture wedding you’re going to have (mine is nudist, if you’re wondering), “20 reasons Jennifer Lawrence should run the world” (more like 50), or “15 books every young gay woman should read.” It touches so many different audiences, and that’s the glory of it. No matter your preferences, you can find something on BuzzFeed to entertain you.



I think Buzzfeed speaks to our generation’s desires to be instantly informed and yet also entertained. I don’t feel guilty finding out which Jane Austen character is my soulmate if I next read about why people are confident that “Obama’s minimum wage message can break through.” Often even the more serious news articles incorporate comedic elements and social trends (i.e, “People in Crimea are taking selfies with soldiers”). No one wants to feel ignorant about the world’s political news, and this site keeps young adults from being neither un-

informed of current events nor bored by the news. Whatever your pleasure, Buzzfeed has something to offer. Check it out and you’ll be hooked too. ❖

Why Journalism Is Underrated

by Faria Rehman '17

Rated as one of the worst jobs by Forbes’ Magazine in 2013, journalism once again tops the charts as one of the most underrated and challenging jobs in America. However, I don’t think the world quite understands how important journalism is, especially in the modern world.

Back before technology and modern communication, which we take for granted, news rarely spread. A war could break out in Italy and it could take days, weeks, even months for other continents to remotely catch drift of what was going on, much less the rest of the planet. Everything spread slowly and connectivity had a totally different meaning. It was as if everyone wasn’t even on the same planet. Our world was divided into towns and cities and countries, and news rarely travelled outside those sections. The only ways news would spread was through word of merchants, explorers, or any other person whose job was to travel long distances on end.

Let’s fast-forward to the modern world. A bomb could go off in Italy tomorrow and the rest of the world would know in an hour, at most. With the addition of social media and online newspapers to print magazines and newspapers, everything can easily be captured and transferred to the rest of planet incredibly quickly. Journalists are working hard day after day- either traveling around the planet, typing in a cramped office, researching for hours on end to craft an article, or get to the center of a story by braving dangerous

conditions - just to bring the public the answers that we impatiently wait for. It’s an incredibly tough job, and according to the Huffington Post, that’s why only one in four journalism majors makes it in the field. Journalists must be quick, educated, and passionate about any project they’re assigned to, no matter how big or small it is; otherwise they won’t be able to properly and accurately convey the scene they’re coming from to the outside world.

Journalists hold an incredible weight on their shoulders- one that requires a good amount of coping with stress and long, strenuous days. They do much more work than we would imagine, and society definitely takes journalists for granted.

Next time you flip through a magazine or read an article, remember all the hard work behind each and every sentence. Although it may just seem like sentences with a few names tossed in every now and then for effect, it’s truly a work of art- a mosaic,



really, of different bits and pieces of experiences and research placed together to tell a story to you, the reader. Each and every article is something unique and important to our world today, and without it, we’d be incredibly uneducated. ❖

Dear Georgia Fox

by Hannah Kaminsky '15

Dear Georgia Fox,

As the warmer months are quickly approaching, I am getting less and less motivated to do my work! I just can't help it! The thought of summer just makes me so excited. Is there anything you recommend to keep me invested in my work during the home stretch to summer?

Sincerely,
An Unmotivated FCS Student

Dear Unmotivated Student,

I absolutely understand where you are coming from! When I was young I went through the same exact thing around this time. Instead of putting off your homework till the last minute, try and get it done as soon as you get home. This will give you free time at the end of each day to relax and do what you would like. Giving yourself this time will give you a time to de-stress your self as well as prepare yourself for the next day at school. Also, instead of using summer as a reason to slack off and not to do your work, think of it in the opposite way. With the warmer months coming up, that means that we are almost at the end. There are only about three months worth of work left, so you might as well try your best in these last months! The piled-up work will only leave

you stressed and not wanting to do any of it! I hope that these tips helped cure your case of the unmotivated student!

Good luck,
Georgia Fox

Dear Georgia Fox,

Prom is coming up...but I don't know the proper way to ask my sweetheart!! Please help me, I'm desperate!

Sincerely,
A Clueless Student

Dear Clueless Student,

Don't worry! I can help you. I happen to be a professional in promposals. My motto is, "go big or go home." The bigger the better! The more the merrier! Here is an example of the perfect promposal, if you ask me. First, hire your soon-to-be date's favorite artist to follow them around all day serenading them. Next put glitter in every class they have to ensure they feel like something is coming. Oh...don't forget to decorate the whole cafeteria with hearts. Lastly, when they are just about to go home, dress up in a clown costume and jump out when they are least expecting it and yell, "WILL YOU JOIN ME AT THE PROM!?". This is just one example of a perfect promposal! Get creative! YOGTP (you only get two promposals)! Good luck!

Love always,
Georgia Fox ❖

Our Micro-Aggressive Habitat

by Peter Dissinger '14

Bullying based on sexual orientation at Friends' Central is a tricky topic. I would feel comfortable telling any visiting student or prospective family that our campus is a safe place for everyone. In fact, I believe that the LGBTQ community is valued on an equal level compared to the straight community at our school. However, I think that this macro level of tranquility is hiding something more subversive. FCS is not immune to daily gay jokes or our societal homophobic attitudes. The term that I have discovered which best fits this problem is micro aggression.

An article by Dr. Kevin L. Nadal talks about six kinds of micro aggressions that LGBTQ people face, defined by Nadal as "everyday encounters of subtle discrimination." Of the six, I am most familiar with "heterosexist terminology", which I have come to understand as phrases or words that actively deride homosexuality. Nadal mentions the classic phrase "that's so gay" as an example of this vocabulary. However, his article focuses specifically on how heterosexist terminology affects the LGTBQ community. In my experience, micro aggression at Friends' Central is also pointed towards straight students who don't conform to all of our stereotypes of classic heterosexuality.

I have found at Friends' Central that most straight males, including myself, are afraid to show intimacy with others of the same sex. Beginning in middle school, we taught ourselves that there was a set of actions, ranging from a hug with a close friend to sleeping in the same bed as another male, that were "gay." Essentially, heterosexist terminology became a tool for bullying against students who didn't follow the norms that we created. Whether those expectations came from society or from our own fear of being labeled as gay, phrases like "that's so gay" became defensive tools for kids who felt

bullied and a tool for bullies. In the midst of hormonally-ravaged 13-year-olds, the "gay" police were everywhere. You couldn't go a week without finding yourself a part of this cycle of accusation.

As a high schooler, I have found that this prejudice has become a less overt tool of judgment instead of an aggressive form of bullying. I sometimes still find myself and my friends muttering the words "that's so gay." Worse, not only do we still decry same-sex intimacy, but we have also progressed to judging others' sexual orientation based on their friendships. In our hyper-repressive society, even heterosexuals who have same-sex sleepovers have to be careful.

One of the reasons that I have found myself at the center of this micro aggressive habitat is that I have had a same-sex best friend for the past five years. Our relationship has always been a positive in my life but, at school, things can be tricky. When we were younger kids, lots of people assumed that we were gay simply because we spent a lot of time at each others' homes. We still get judging looks from time to time, but I think our friendship has become more widely accepted. It seems that, in our grade, we are outliers as "best friends." Most other straight males with close friends like to see themselves as "bros": sounds more heterosexual to them, I guess.

Our culture may be kind and cuddly on the outside, but we're still very aggressive about determining and sorting our peers' sexual orientations. Many students at Friends' Central have a narrow-minded understanding of sexuality. They don't understand that things like intimacy and friendships do not reveal a person's sexual orientation. Hopefully, there will be a time when male friendships will be able to overcome these barriers, but our generation seems deeply entrenched in using micro-aggressions to reinforce our prejudice around sexual orientation. ❖

Focus Photo Shoot

photos by Noah Silvestry '15

and Peter Dissinger '14

For the editorial issue, Focus decided to include pictures of the writers so that students could see the faces of the newspaper. Here is a collage of the pictures that we could not fit elsewhere! ❖



Bill Darling: Spiritual Derivatives

by Anna Sorenson '15

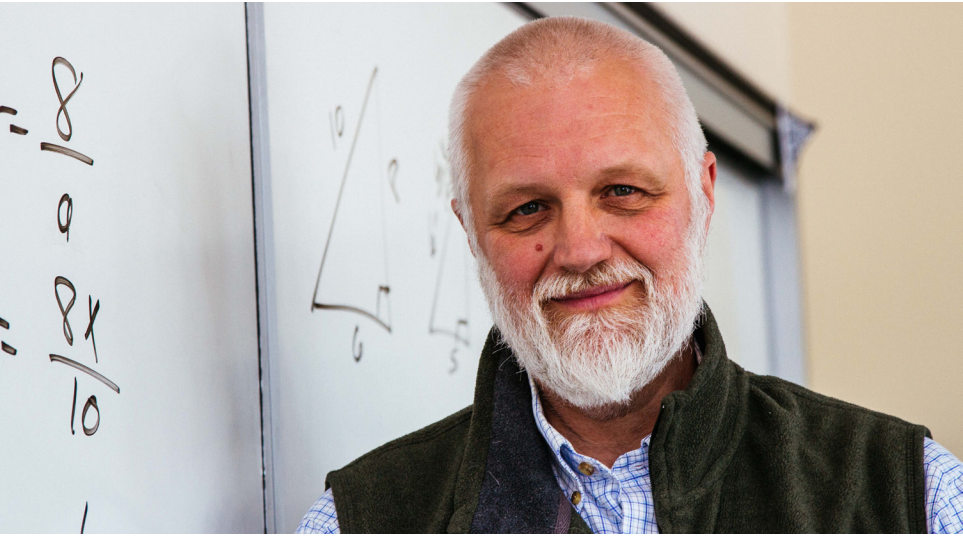
Often in Meeting for Worship, Mr. Darling relates Bible stories to the world of calculus and his own life. We all know that Mr. Darling teaches math, but did you know that he has a background in theological school? I sat down with Mr. Darling to learn more about his religious background so that the rest of the Friends' Central community could get to know him better too.

Why did you choose to go to seminary?

Mr. Darling: When I got done with my

your life here at FCS?

I teach at this level because I enjoy the age group, and I enjoy the possibility in every student. For me, it's about helping high schoolers feel good about who they are and in the process, have them think a little bit about who they are and who they want to become. This is a time adolescents are trying to define themselves. You're separating from your parents, you're separating from other adults, you're trying on different things, what fits, what doesn't fit. Those are all religious questions for me. For me, who you are



undergraduate program, I decided that I wanted to be a parish minister. That was the result of a lot of inner workings. I was very active in a Christian group on campus and my father was a parish minister. I grew up as a Presbyterian, and Princeton is a Presbyterian seminary, so I chose that school.

What did you like most about your experience?

There are a couple of things. I liked the study in particular of the Old Testament in Hebrew. To study the Old Testament in the original language was fascinating to me. Also, it was while I was there that I was introduced to Quaker meeting. Stony Brook Meeting was about a 20 minute walk from the [Princeton] campus. On occasion, we would go there when we didn't have an assignment. It was really amazing to sit in there: it would be snowing out and we'd have this fireplace going, it was almost like being transported back in time.

There were some amazing professors who were profoundly spiritual. As they taught, their faith and spirituality came through. For them, it was not purely an academic exercise. I really enjoyed studying with those individuals. It's a really difficult thing to do, because when you go to a divinity school or a seminary, if they're doing their job, they're having you dismantle your system of beliefs. The hope is then that when you leave, you will have rebuilt them. But the dismantling of what you think you believe is an incredibly difficult process. You're taking your world apart.

Why did you choose to teach, instead of becoming a minister?

I worked at a parish in upstate New York for two years. The administrative part of the parish can be a nightmare. I was young, and I didn't have the patience for that. What I discovered was that I liked teaching. So I got into teaching. I always enjoyed math, so I ended up going to the Pomfret School. The whole time I was there, I continued preaching at a Congregational church in Pomfret, Connecticut. So it was kind of a transition.

How do math and religion fit together in

is always in a relationship to your spiritual self. I try to communicate that finding this sense of self is something worthy of your time. In Meeting For Worship I use the Bible, in class I use Shakespeare's sonnets.

In a sense, math is my 'in' into working with adolescents. And then of course we go through what calculus is or whatever the math course is I'm teaching at the time and you get the information, but more importantly we connect as human beings and we at times talk about things other than "what is a derivative?" And those are the truly important moments.

What makes Friends' Central different for you?

When you begin to look at who you are in this world. Who are you in relation to your spirit. And where is that spirit taking you or where can it take you? And what is it that you have yet to discover? To me, that's what makes FCS different. The testimonies grew out of the fact that early Friends had a deep spiritual sense of who they were and God's work in this world. And the ideas of equality and truth seeking and simplicity are all related to a spiritual understanding of self. So, the reason simplicity is important is because if I have all this junk in my life that keeps me from sitting down and listening for God's voice, then those things are inhibiting me from finding out who I truly am. They're all distractions, they're all illusions. The spiritual essence of a lot of religions is that you have to shed the things of this world so that you can make a connection to the things of the spirit. That is really hard at a school like this. So much of it is about our distractions. Which is why I've struggled with the introduction of the iPad. It's yet another distraction - or it has the potential to be another distraction. It also has a huge potential for communication and gathering and dispersing information.

Discovering the spiritual self leads you to different values and it leads you to different ways of looking at your world and your life. If we can get you to do that, and begin that by the time you leave here, that is the greatest gift we could ever give. ❖

Ms. Perez: More Than a Lit Teacher

by Maya Rosenberg '14

Some students know Ms. Perez as a trilingual Colombian Spanish teacher. Others know her as their challenging but passionate literature teacher. However, I'm sure very few of you know that Ms. Perez's repertoire covers much more than the humanities. She planned to become a doctor and spent the summers working at a children's hospital where she was able to scrub in on surgeries. She attended Swarthmore College as an undergraduate where she took classes that prepared her for medical school and nurtured her love for physics and biology.

After getting into medical school, Ms. Perez asked to defer for a year. This gap year eventually turned into a permanent job when she found an opening as a Spanish and French teacher at FCS. She decided to keep teaching instead of going to medical school, a decision she is happy that she made! While her doctor friends dread coming home from vacation, Ms. Perez "can't wait to get back to work after summer break." Work energizes her, and she is "totally happy."

Following her passion for literature

and discussion, Ms. Perez earned her Masters degree in English Literature, and now teaches both Spanish and English Lit. When asked if there was one thing that she wants people to know about her, Ms. Perez laughed and explained that over her seventeen years at Friends' Central, she has heard from students and faculty that she is intimidating. She wants everyone to know that she's "really not that scary."

As a student of Ms. Perez in both Spanish and English, I can vouch that she is easy to talk to. From making sure I am okay when



I seem upset to helping me edit my essays, Ms. Perez has helped me succeed as a student. Don't be fooled by her reputation; Ms. Perez is one of the many approachable and friendly teachers at FCS and one of the few who can help me in Spanish *and* Bio! ❖

Focus Meets Phoenix!

by Peter Dissinger '14

and Emilia Weinberg '14

Recently, we decided to reach out to the Middle School newspaper, the Phoenix Inquirer, to attempt to team up with them and establish a connection between the two newspapers at Friends' Central. As we are beginning to hand over the newspaper to juniors, we really wanted to leave a positive legacy for future generation of writers at our school. When the two of us first met the staff, we found the writers and illustrators engaging, interested and intellectual. We had a variety of great discussions with the Middle Schoolers about writing and managing a newspaper. we were in awe about how devoted they were to writing for the Inquirer. We sincerely hope that the students we met will bring their ideas to Focus in the next few coming years.

However, in the short term, we have some very exciting news. Towards the end of April, Focus and

The Phoenix Inquirer will be publishing a collaborative issue centered on topics about life in the Middle School and Upper School. We'll be doing a major workshop together on April 2nd to brainstorm article topics and also talk about writing effective articles. We also hope to develop a mission statement for our newspaper with the help of the Inquirer. Be on the lookout for this issue and an awesome surprise for our final Focus issue! ❖



Phoenix in the Phast Lane: Max Ginsberg

by Josh Benjet '16

Senior Max Ginsberg has been a three-sport varsity athlete throughout high school, playing soccer, basketball, and tennis each year. When Max was younger, he was a natural at sports and played as many as he could. However, when it came time to narrow down which sports he played he chose these three team-oriented sports because of the competitive nature and the mental and physical challenges that these sports had to offer. He enjoys being able to play with three totally different teams of people and not having to hyper focus on any one sport. Max also loves playing sports at school because he feels that it has given him so many “unbelievable friendships” that he will always have.

Earlier this year, Max scored the game winning penalty kick against Malvern Prep, to give FCS its first ever play-off win in the Pennsylvania Independent Schools State Soccer tournament. Some of Max's other highlights include being

a part of the two-time state championship basketball team, and “being beat in practice by some of the best basketball players Friends’ Central has ever seen,” including Amile Jefferson, who is now starting as a power forward at Duke University. Max has won three straight league titles as a first doubles player on



the FCS tennis team and has not lost a match yet in high school! He looks to continue that streak this upcoming tennis season. Looking ahead, Max wants to continue playing at least one of these sports in college. While he is likely only going to play at the club level (which is only a step below Varsity), we wish him the best of luck with whatever sports he does decide to play! ❖

Phoenix in the Phast Lane: The Flick Sisters

by Emilia Weinberg '14

Initially, the girls’ swim season looked grim. Having just lost five Seniors and only gaining one ninth grader, the chances of continuing our 8-year FSL winning streak seemed nearly impossible. But the Flick sisters, Emily and Elizabeth, remained positive, determined to have a successful and memorable season. Both

team, but this year their contributions were invaluable, leading the team to a silver medal the the FSL Championship meet. Elizabeth won bronze in the 100 Back and silver in the 100 Free and Emily won gold in the 500 Free and silver in the 200 Free. They also led our relay (with 9th grader Sydney Chamley-Oerton) to a gold in the 200 Free Relay and a silver in the 400 Free Relay. On the season Emily says, “I like the competitiveness in races but I also like the friendships in the pool: joking around during sets, having to speak three words at a time before the next send off.”

As their longtime friend and teammate, I have had the pleasure of watching both girls swim for many years. But this season was perhaps the most impressive. It gave the entire team new life and determination to watch Emily and Elizabeth overcome injury, constantly have great swims, and bring our team together as one community. Both girls hope to continue swimming in college and I know they will be great competitors, teammates, and friends wherever they end up. ❖



sisters started the season just recovering from injury - Emily, a torn ACL and Elizabeth, a strained labrum. On her ACL injury, Emily says “It’s been difficult. I hate that I’m swimming slower than I ever have before. It is frustrating that I can have a good practice and then because I swam well I have a swollen knee the next day and can’t kick.” However, neither sister let these issues slow her down. They made sure to practice every day, preparing themselves for each meet. Since 9th grade, Emily and Elizabeth have been strong members of the

Artists in the Spotlight: Seniors in the Play

by Grace Kauffman-Rosengarten '16

The FCS drama department regularly astounds the Friends’ Central community with its ingenious interpretation of plays from all time periods and of all types. Terry Guerin, the beloved director of these plays, always manages to create a magical world in which her actors can explore the stories of their characters. This year was no different. In the fall, Edges, a song cycle written by Benj Pasek, a product of the FCS drama department, was a huge success. From February 27th to March 1st, Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing ran, sweeping its audience into the euphoria of Post-WWII New York City and elegantly presenting the complicated and hilarious adventures of a group of nobles looking for love. The play was filled with many talented actors of the Senior class who have spent much of their time in high school rehearsing, performing, and acting in the drama department. These actors were Noah Gilford, Katie Gillis,

Will Keith, Chiara Neilson, Maggie Nierenberg, Anna Phillips, Haley Pogachefsky, Camille Seidel, Matt Strahan, and Jen Thal. Together they were the core of Much Ado About Nothing, as well as, for the past four years, of the drama department itself. While they have made their mark on the plays and other dramatic arts in the past four years, their experiences have also made a mark on them. One Senior wrote that “acting has not only instilled confidence in me, but it also has helped me discover who I am.” Many others echoed this sentiment, as well as the idea that “being part of these projects...is an incredible practice in teamwork and responsibility.” Anna Phillips, Camille Seidel, and Will Keith have all felt so moved by their experiences with the drama department that they plan to continue to study theater and acting in college. The Seniors this year were an uncommonly talented and dedicated group of actors and will be missed terribly next year. ❖



(Pictured from left to right) Will Keith, Camille Seidel, Noah Gilford, Chiara Neilson, Anna Phillips, Matt Strahan and Maggie Nierenberg.

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