QUEER WORDS

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Special Issue: A Tribute to Jim Davis



Queer Words is an ongoing archive of writing by Friends' Central students, alumni, faculty, and staff of all sexual orientations. The Gay Straight Alliance is thankful to all who contributed to this collection and is proud to publish these submissions.

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Queer Words began in 2002 when the following note was submitted anonymously to a teacher's mailbox:

"I don't know exactly what to say but I still want to add my voice here. I am gay... and it's really hard to even write that statement. I know Friends' Central is supposed to be really accepting, but I still have not come out to anybody. I guess I'm afraid. I don't want people to change around me. I will never be straight, but sometimes it feels good to pretend I am, so that I can just act the way I always have, and feel less out of place. I wonder how many other FCS students are in the same position: always pretending. I wonder how long it will be before I can't pretend any longer."

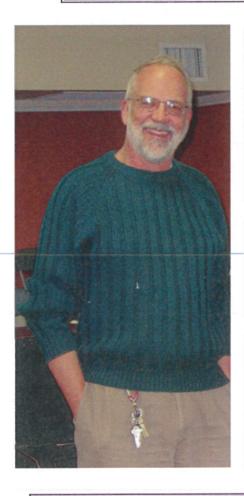
We pay tribute to Jim Davis in this special edition of *Queer Words*. For 39 years, Jim has served as teacher, mentor, advocate, role model, confidant, and dear friend to so many in our community. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, Mr. Davis has filled one other important role - that of an out and proud gay man. In a world that offers few positive examples of LGBTQ adults to young people, especially teachers, Jim's words, actions, and very presence are daily gifts. He has taught LGBTQ students that life can be filled with hope and love, and that it can be lived with dignity, passion, pride, good humor, and immense compassion. Mr. Davis' life shows that being LGBTQ is a gift, but is only one aspect of a rich life, something that influences one's being but does not need to be the sole definer. After all, Jim cannot be put into a narrowly defined box. He is a musician, composer, vocalist, church member, Flyers enthusiast, Miss America Pageant trivia guru, *Brokeback Mountain* devotee, foodie, opera lover, brother, uncle, son, and devoted partner. Above all, he is our Mr. Davis, and we can't imagine life without him.

The selections that follow speak of the many gifts Jim Davis has so freely given over the years. This is our simple, and wholly inadequate, way to say "Thank you" and "We love you".

May the Lord bless you and keep you always. We will surely always keep you in our hearts.

Al Vernacchio

TRIBUTES FROM FORMER STUDENTS / FACULTY



Katie Bowker '08

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is helping me with my gaydar:)

One think I really love about Mr. Davis is that he is a friend to all of his students and a really great support system for anyone.

Sammy Dweck '07

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is the courage he has demonstrated as a faculty sponsor for the GSA.

Sean O'Brien '09

I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for how he made me feel welcome at FCS in my two short years as a student. His kindness as a teacher and friend helped facilitate my transition into a new community.

Libby Fifer '09

One thing that I admire about Mr. Davis is his passion. Whether he is teaching, singing or being an activist, his enthusiasm is contagious. In GSA, as well as in his other endeavors, Mr. Davis brings an enthusiasm and excitement to every interaction, always eager to spread his passion. Even after so many years at Friends' Central, his energy never fails him. Always bringing a light to those 7:45 AM meetings, Jim Davis never ceases to make me smile.

DeBreea Dunston '10

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is being a role model, friend and mentor! I wouldn't have been half as gay as I am now if it wasn't for Mr. Davis (along with Mr.V) being a dynamic duo letting me know that gay is okay! Mr. Davis, you will be truly missed. I am extremely blessed for having an education at Friends' Central but, even more blessed for meeting you.

Lee Fogel '03

Dear Mr. Davis,

I never realized quite how lucky I was to go to a high school with a GSA and out teachers, until I went to college and shared my stories with other students there. Many people were just amazed at how open our school was. They'd say things like "Wow, there weren't any gay teachers at my school... At least not that I knew of." To this day, I am so grateful for how our out teachers - who I so admired as strong, smart, giving adults - were also there for me as mentors during my various coming out experiences.

Friends' Central's GSA also continues to be a source of pride for me. Hearing about how things are developing with themed GSA dances, Days of Silence, and how there are more out students makes me so happy! I'm glad that FCS is continuing to grow as a nurturing place for students of all sexual and gender orientations, and I celebrate your role in all of this!

You are an incredible mentor, ally, and leader for the LGBTQ community and their straight allies...and, there is something more I want to say to you. I want to thank you for showing me how being these ways for the LGBTQ community is a natural part of being a strong leader, mentor and ally for all people. As a teacher, vocal director, and longtime FCS community member, you have been a mentor and ally for so many people. So many of us have looked to you for inspiration, support, warmth and joyful expression in our lives.

So, I thank you. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for being an ally, a role model and a source of deep support for young people, LGBTQ students, and so many others.

May you feel filled with the joy and love that you share, and may your life continue to be a blessing.

With love, Lee Fogel











Eli Muhrer '05

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his passion for mentoring his students.

One thing I really love about Mr. Davis is his warm, joyful laugh.

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is creating a safe space in GSA to build a community.

Ian Ramsey-North '03

Mr. Davis had more than poise and grace. He had the ability to be both incredibly polished and completely genuine. He could make opera and musical theory come alive while honoring the everyday anxieties and concerns of his students. It's been said that music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life. This was nowhere truer than in Mr. Davis' classroom.

Sarah Bacal-Balik '09

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his unwavering passion for music and devotion to his students. Albert Einstein once said, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." Mr. Davis inspired us all to sing and to create with his vivacity and sharp wit. He commanded respect, which we happily gave him; for not only did he impress us with his knowledge and skill, but he gave us respect in return, treating us as equals and adults. I take great pride in calling Mr. Davis my teacher, and I will forever remember him as a mentor and a dear friend.

Catherine Weingarten '09

One thing I really love about Mr. Davis is how encouraging he was at GSA. He always made it a fun and open atmosphere to be able to speak your mind. As an awkward and desperate student, he always comforted me with a snarky smile and a comment about what he was eating that morning. Some days I was overdosed with Mr. Davis because I had GSA, chorus and musical theater vocal group rehearsals and it was the best thing ever. Mr. Davis is always humble, hilarious, wise and easy to talk to. I feel so lucky that he was my teacher.





Bryan Farrar '08

In my time at Friends' Central Mr. Davis was a lot of things: a teacher, a music and choir director, a mentor, and a role model. But, most of all Mr. Davis was a friend. To every student that walked through his door he was open and understanding. My high school experience would have been severely lacking without his guidance and presence. For that I am extremely grateful.

Mary Crauderueff '03

One thing I'm grateful for is how Mr. Davis always encouraged and supported our ideas, no matter how crazy they were, and his ability to gently give us the constructive criticism we needed to learn.

Sam Karpinski '10

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is that he continually has faith in people and hope for the future.

One thing I really love about Mr. Davis is that he loves the students.

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is helping to make the GSA so extraordinary.



Chris Green '10

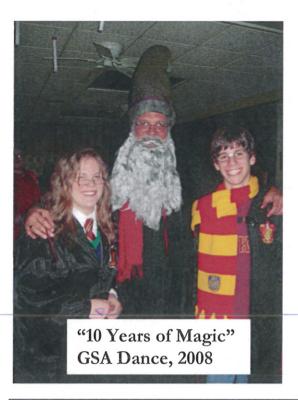
One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his ability to raise a person's spirits. I know that if I'm feeling badly for whatever reason, Mr. Davis will always have some funny remark that can make things seem all right.

Steph Liem '05

One thing I love about Mr. Davis is the way he brought out the best in all of us. Besides being extremely fabulous himself, he enabled us to be fabulous as well, not just in school but in life.

Madelena Rizzo '10

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his passion. He pours his soul into everything, from chorus to classes to GSA. Whenever I saw him I often thought to myself, "I really hope I can be as energetic and inspiring as Mr. Davis when I am his age." Every day for him was pregnant with opportunity and bursting with joy. His spirit will continue to resonate within the FCS buildings for years to come.



Alec Unkovic '08

I have always admired that Mr. Davis was outspoken for civil rights and social acceptance and refused to be quiet about his anger over intolerance and bigotry. The positive impact Mr. Davis had on me as a young gay man is enormous and I consider him a true role model. Jim Davis is an inspiring and truly interesting individual with a generous spirit and I feel blessed to know him and to have learned from him. I thank him for his dedication to Friends' Central's GSA for so many years and I am confident he will touch many more people where ever he is.



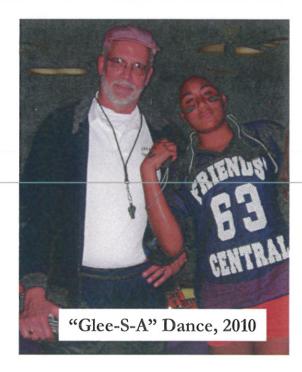
Kristen Mann '10

One thing I really loved about Mr. Davis is his positive attitude and passion towards GSA. Mr. Davis always arrived to the GSA meetings with a warm greeting and a smile. He made it very easy for everyone to feel welcome and at home. He also showed his passion for GSA by sharing useful information and providing a shoulder to lean on for all those who needed it. Mr. Davis helped to create a comfortable and fun loving atmosphere for all the students of GSA which served as a home away from home.



Dani Gershkoff '06

At Oberlin College, a big part of my life is the time I spend in queer communities. I respect and give thanks to what Friends' Central is building and was building while I was a student. I am learning about what pride can look like, and what we are all up against. Mr. Davis, you are bold. Please know, that is important work you have been doing. I have benefited from the encouragement you fostered in the Friends' Central community.



Emily Ramsey North '00

My Music Teacher Taught Me to See

I remember the early days of the Gay-Straight Alliance, I do. I remember them, though the details of those early morning meetings are mostly gone. I remember sliding into the desks after pushing them into a circle; I remember the music room upstairs in Shallcross; I remember most of the faces and names. But what I really remember about being there was that I felt that I was getting to see and be seen.

We gathered there for many reasons- to talk about issues that affect GLBTQ people, and to talk about how those issues played out specifically at Friends' Central. We gathered to support each other, and to think about how we could make our school community a place where support didn't have to be found only in groups designed for that purpose. We wanted to grow and learn and live in a place where everyone felt safe- and not safe by virtue of invisibility or anonymity, but safe in being seen.

Mr. Davis has a natural ability to make people feel seen, heard, understood. Perhaps this is one of the many benefits of living our lives in keeping with our own values- it affords us a peacefulness with which we can approach our dealings with others. Mr. Davis seemed to be able to see us as we were. He had an ease about him- the kind of gracefulness that is found in people who are calm in their hearts- and his presence invited us to be at ease too.

We came to GSA because we already knew that we wanted to be part of a place that included and honored everyone, just as they were. Mr. Davis's presence and leadership gave us the opportunity to feel just how powerful the changes we hoped to make might be. He taught us to be witnesses to each other, to not only look but rather to see. The experience of being seen- the transformative power of really being seen- reminded us how much everyone needed this and deserved to have it.



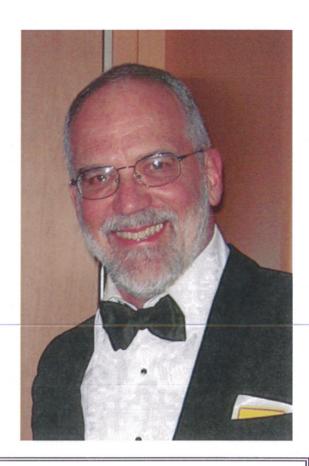
Kate Fussner '05

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is impossible to name! How could I be thankful for just one thing?!?! Mr. Davis is an incredible teacher AND a wonderful role model. He was able to balance rigorous, thoughtful teaching with a great sense of humor. He built relationships with all of his students, including those of us who wanted to sing far beyond our talent (see: myself). Mr. Davis brought energy, laughter and light to Friends' Central, and he will certainly be missed.

Angelique Benrahou '10

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his sense of person. He has on his tie but leaves it loose around his neck, he is a towering tree of a man, but he never made me feel small (mostly because he was either sitting in MFW, GSA, or in front of a piano.)

I always felt welcomed, even though I wasn't a musician, singer or out as a lesbian, Mr. Davis always smiled and said hello. I regret not spending more time with my second favorite GSA man (Mr. V being the first) but for the few times I had a small conversation, I knew he was someone who really embodied the ideas of Quakerism and self-reliance.



Sarah Bach '07

One thing I am thankful to Mr. Davis is that he appreciated every single person for the things that made them special and individual. Mr. Davis was such a comforting presence, and I knew if I ever felt insecure about who I was, just spending a few minutes with Mr. Davis was enough to restore my self-confidence. I have never been more moved by anyone's music, and I will never forget the opportunity to sing his words and melodies.

Thank you for everything Mr. Davis!

Caroline Fenkel '07

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his passion for teaching. His love for teaching is very apparent as soon as you interact with him which helps students to be interested in the subject.

One thing I really love about Mr. Davis is his humor. I always remember sitting in his classes and the way he incorporated humor in his classes made me look forward to each class

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is teaching me about the wonderful world of music. It is something I will cherish for the rest of my life and am able to use on a daily basis.

Geoff Wertime '02

Thank You!

I'm tempted to write how important it was that Mr. Davis was the first out teacher I knew (and who I knew was out), but I think that misses the larger point. (Also, he told me to call him Jim.)

The truth is that when I came to middle school, I was scared. I was afraid of being one of the youngest in a new environment, of my own sexuality, of living up to my brother's reputation, and all those other things you worry about when you're 10. I didn't do a lot of things that might have interested me, but the one I regret most is that I somehow let four years go by without joining chorus. This despite the fact that my brother was a longtime singer and that most of my friends would disappear during seemingly random free periods to go have fun together. Still, I had the opportunity to see Jim (who, naturally, I called Mr. Davis back then) in various music electives, which I always enjoyed even though I didn't expect to.

It wasn't until I was a freshman that I finally joined the chorus. My brother had just graduated, and Jim convinced me by saying, "We have to have a Wertime in the chorus." Somehow, that one line defeated all of my shyness and my self-professed lack of singing ability. As the years went by, I learned to follow along with my fellow tenors, even if I was never destined to be a vocal superstar.

For the next four years, I saw Jim in chorus, music history and even in GSA once I had finally come out my senior year. By that time, I had come to understand just how genuine was his concern for his students. His warm presence is hard to convey on paper, but is perhaps best described as the pedagogical equivalent of hot cocoa—it's good for your soul.

It's always been obvious Jim loves teaching, because it animates him for hours longer than most people can stay on their feet. Why else would I have bumped into him at 6 p.m. on a Thursday night years after graduating, when I stopped by to show my boyfriend my old school? (My boyfriend, weirdly enough, thinks of him as "Jim" and gets confused when I refer to "Mr. Davis.")

The world is a better place because of Jim Davis and the many students he inspired. It seems every FCS alum has a story of how Mr. Davis inspired them, even if they never took more than an elective with him. As much time as I spent in his classroom, it never felt like enough. But even if no amount of teaching could ever make me an opera star, I did guard at least one lesson – he taught me to accept who I am and to feel the music inside myself.

Thank You! Thank You!

Casey Cipriani '01

Dear Mr. Davis,

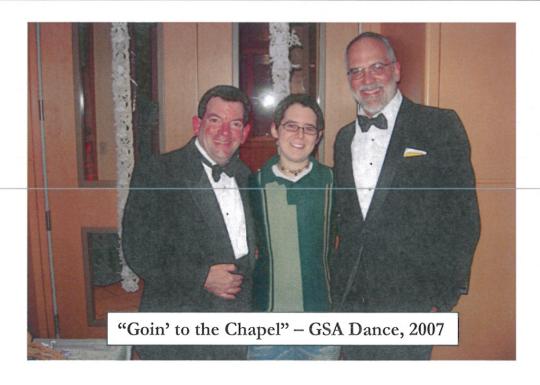
This is just a short and sweet note to thank you for being an exceptional teacher, and one of my favorites during my time at Friends' Central. Students found their voices because of you and the fantastic chorus. Students found bravery because of you and your support in small vocal groups. Students found their inner star because of you and your involvement in the plays. Students found acceptance and a role model because of you and the life changing GSA. All of these wonderful things needed you to function to their highest ability. I've missed you since graduation, 10 whole years, but the community of FCS will surely be missing you all the more. I wish you luck and happiness on life away from FCS. Let me know when you're up in NYC, we'll take in a show;)

Love, Casey Cipriani

Jasper Liem '98

Mr. Davis has been such an inspiration for me. He taught me about the courage to be myself before I even knew what that might mean.

One thing I simply love about Jim is his dedication and service to others. He has this gift of seeing the truth and goodness in another person and cultivating that spirit. He also has the incredible courage to help fight for that space of cultivation. It wasn't until after I had graduated from FCS that I knew how hard he fought to support the GSA in its infancy. When I have moments of self-doubt or anxiety about something new, his courage and advocacy carry me through the fear and into action.





Kate Fox '07

One thing I admire about Mr. Davis is his open-door policy for any student's woes. No problem was too big or too small for Mr. Davis, and he always knew exactly what to say to make you feel important again.

Ariela Weinberger '08

Mr. Davis has been one of those teachers who never quite fit the teacher category I always tried to put him in. As an 8th grader I found him scary and maybe even mean (a conclusion I made because he taught upper school and seemed grumpy on our fist class on a snowy cold day) until he started talking about his love of hockey and I saw him actually laugh (something I now know he does quite often). In 10th grade I thought Mr. Davis was a super serious music teacher, having him for music theory, until I realized that he had a love of all music not just the baroque stuff. As member of the chorus, and vocal jazz, I learned how funny and kind Mr. Davis was. In 11th and 12th grade I took German as a little elective twice with Mr. Calder and Mr. Davis was kind enough to not only listen to me struggle through the 5 words I knew but, he would actually respond to me in German and applaud me for trying to speak in a new language. I am thankful to not only have had the opportunity to be taught by Mr. Davis but to learn a life lesson: that you can never put someone into a box.

Emily Bach '10

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is the fact that he believed in me enough to ask me to be a co-president of the GSA. When Mr. Davis and Mr. V approached me at lunch I thought I was in trouble for something, but was astonished and honored when they asked me if I would be interested in being a co-president of the following year's GSA with Carrie Sutherland. Although I may have not been the most pro-active or accomplished co-president, I was so touched that Mr. Davis would think of me as a potential leader for such a wonderful group. The GSA has been blessed to have Mr. Davis as a cheerful, wise, respected, loving mentor who succeeded in educating us about LGBT issues, and never failed to put a smile on everyone's faces. I was so proud to have someone like Mr. Davis as one of the representatives for FCS's GLBT community, and writing this has made me realize how much I miss it. I am so lucky to have gotten to spend time with you, Mr. Davis! I wish you all the best and hope to keep in touch over years to come! I will never forget you.

David Glasser '02

If all Mr. Davis had done at Friends' Central was conduct two choruses, lead a half dozen small vocal groups, and teach music rotations, history, and theory classes, he would still have been one of the most memorable people I've known. But his passion for his students didn't end there; whether it was creating a safe supportive space for my queer friends to express themselves in early-morning GSA meetings and late night GSA movie nights (including inviting along students from schools where GSAs were banned), to squeezing in extra "Music Theory 2" classes during lunch, Mr. Davis's smiling face lit up FCS from dawn till way past dusk. I especially will never forget the support he gave our community when one of my former classmates passed away my senior year. Thank you, Mr. Davis.



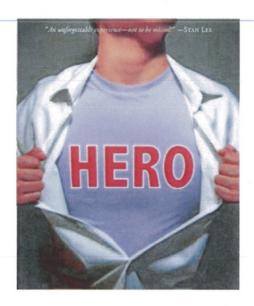
Diane DeVan (Upper School Administrative Assistant 1981-2010)

Mr. D, you and I go way back (29 years) sharing so many conversations and just a look at times when words weren't necessary! You are indeed very special to me and may the Lord continue to bless you and keep you ...

Mrs. D

Tom Ringe '09

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is being an "out" role model. Growing up, I did not know many adults who were out of the closet, so for years I did not know anyone older than me who wasn't straight. Growing up with so few gay adults around really made it more difficult to be out, as the only information I really had access to was whatever my friends and I learned from experience. Once I went to FCS, I found that even more valuable than friends who were like me were role models who had gone through the same situations as I had. Among the many teachers who inspired me was Mr. Davis, who I met later in my time at Friends'. Having people like Mr. Davis, who knew what being queer meant for them, and treated it as just another part of their personalities was absolutely invaluable in my own coming out experience. Coming out was not very easy, but Mr. Davis helped inspire me to do it anyway.



Jeremy Greenbaum '07

I will never forget the relief I felt upon transferring to Friends' Central in 9th grade. It was such a beautiful thing to enter into a school community that had openly gay faculty and students. It was refreshing to see them embraced without reservation by others, but for me it was even more inspiring to see how they embraced themselves. There was no shame and no apologies; they were proud.

One of the teachers who really inspired me in this way was Mr. Davis. He is a role model for me not only because of who he is and what he stands for, but also because of how loved he is by every student and every faculty member. As a young high-schooler, it gave me hope that coming out didn't have to be lonely or shameful... It could instead be a celebration of embracing every part of myself. As corny as that sounds, it's entirely true... Mr. Davis taught me that if you accept and love yourself, others WILL follow. Thank you, Mr. Davis, for being such an amazing role model for us all.

Davya Eschenazi '09

Mr. Davis is someone I cannot admire enough.



I first met Mr. Davis in my Sophomore year at Friends' Central. I was at a moment of deep anxiety and frustration concerning my identity. I decided to attend GSA and began considering coming out. I was extremely torn as to what to do. I told very few people I felt I could trust. At my very first GSA meeting, I remember being struck by the power, strength, and elegance with which Mr. Davis talked about the gay community. At such a time, this is precisely what I needed; so Mr. Davis became one of the very few people I trusted with my identity. In my life, I have come out as bisexual, gay, and transgendered. Scarcely have I felt more respect concerning these manifestations of myself than from Mr. Davis. With solemnity, spirit, joy, celebration, and grace, the manner in which he actively addresses and represents the LGBT community should make Mr. Davis an example for said community in the U.S. and in the world.

In my darkest times, when I truly needed help in order to sustain my life, Mr. Davis was there for me. In my senior year, I went into a nervous breakdown. Mr. Davis took great care that I met with and continued to meet with the school therapist. There are a few instances when I was enraged with myself and crying, and in those moments I remember Mr. Davis talking to me about my worth, my wholesomeness as an individual, creating a reality in which things can work themselves out. Mr. Davis' kindness is profound; his concern for humanity boundless.

I was lucky enough to have experienced Mr. Davis as an educator and chorus director as well. In my senior year, Mr. Davis was my music theory teacher. I was a horrible student. Music theory was no long term interest of mine, nor was music making, and I began to believe that I could never even get close to music theory for the rest of my life. Mr. Davis never once gave up on me. It was the perseverance of my music theory teacher, tirelessly offering an enormous level of musical sophistication and appreciation, that I recalled after graduating, that I referred to when I decided to start playing the flute again, an activity I had abandoned in middle school.

As a chorus director, his leadership was enormous. I always felt a good deal of trust from Mr. Davis. Through his solemnity, as well as through his impossibly imitable, precise sense of humor, I found chorus to be more than just a musical expression. Through Mr. Davis' devotion, I learned that it was a routine that evoked diversity, unity, self-reliance, and self-respect.

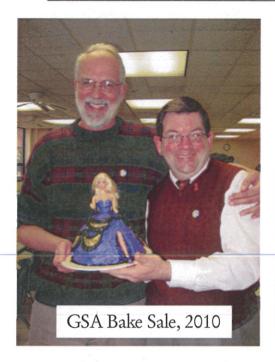
It is difficult to express how much I admire Mr. Davis. There are too many qualities of his to name that come back to me in my post Friends' Central life. One of my big regrets is not having known Mr. Davis longer, as I came to FCS in sophomore year. I only hope that we can continue our political, literary, spiritual, and casual discussions over a cup of coffee in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Davis, for your precious and monumental contributions to my high school.

E M M A F O X '10





TRIBUTES FROM CURRENT STUDENTS / FACULTY



Chelsea Bedford 12

The first memory I have of Mr. Davis was when all the controversy over the homophobic graffiti happened last year. I remember being really upset that people were actually sticking up for the "freedom of speech" that the writer of the graffiti had, when Mr. Davis said, "who cares about the person's right to freedom of speech? I think any homophobic and hurtful comment is just wrong and evil." I completely agreed with him and have never forgotten what his words meant to me and my brother.

You'll be missed Mr. Davis!



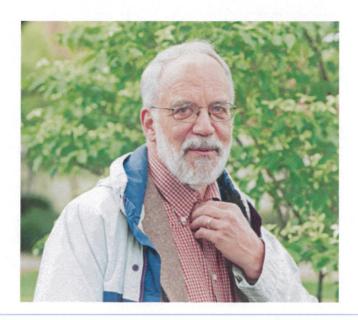






Antonia DiLuca '12

When I first joined GSA, I was immediately welcomed by Mr. Davis's warm smile. I always look forward to my everyday encounters with him. Even though I am not in chorus and only in GSA with Mr. Davis, whenever he sees me during the day, he always greets me using my first name. I know that does not sound like that much, but it really shows how important it is to him to get to know each and every student. There are many people who when passing by say, "hey how are you?" and do not wait for a response, but Mr. Davis always waits and always seems so interested in how my day is going. When he leaves, I am always going to miss those small conversations we have, and our early mornings in the GSA rooms. I always look forwards to Fridays, not only because it is the last day before the weekend, but because Mr. Davis is always there in GSA and always finds some way to make me laugh, even when he does not realize it. I do not know him as well as I would have liked, but I do feel a very strong connection. I am really thankful to have met someone like Mr. Davis because he is such a great inspiration to me. My wish is to be able to impact at least half the amount of the people that he has and to leave a legacy like he has.



Alex Kleiman '11

Through his kind, honest way of speaking, Mr. Davis has opened my eyes to a struggle that some closeted LGBTQ people face: keeping an integral part of one's identity a secret. Earlier this year, Mr. Davis had a long talk with his music history class (of which I was a part) about what it had historically been like to be a gay teacher at Friends' Central. Sadly, to be a gay teacher at Friends' Central was to be a closeted gay teacher at Friends' Central. I had imagined that some problems gay teachers had faced might involve the fear of discovery, dealing with homophobic sentiments, and keeping one's sexual identity a secret. But I had always imagined hiding this information was much like keeping any other secret—it was hard to do, and nobody could find out. However, by hearing about how difficult it was for some faculty to refrain from expressing such an important part of their identity, I realized that being closeted meant much more than trying to avoid a slip of the tongue. I now see that it means constraining a part of oneself. It means not being free. It means not being able to openly love oneself to the fullest.

The point of my writing is not to suggest that every closeted individual has dealt with these feelings. Rather, the purpose of this piece is to thank Mr. Davis for opening up my eyes to an important struggle that some LGBTQ people may face. To me, this realization was not merely a lesson in understanding other people, but yet another reminder of the importance of embracing one's identity and loving oneself.

Jenna Bergman '14

I really admire Mr. Davis for all the hard work he's put into the chorus program, as well as eighth grade music classes and showcase. Mr. Davis has left me with so many wonderful memories, and it takes a truly incredible person to touch the amount of people that he has. Chorus will never be the same without him.



Holly Woodbury '13

What I admire about Mr. Davis is that he can find the good in every person and the worth of every person he teaches/meets. I am thankful for Mr. Davis for helping me see that anyone can sing ("If you can talk, you can sing") and showing me that I have a voice, whether on or off the stage.

Bill Fedullo '12

Thank you, Mr. Davis, for always having a friendly word to say. While I have never had you as a teacher or chorus director, your kindness, good humor, and obvious passion for what you do have always made me grateful to be a part of the Friends' Central community. I am so glad that I had a chance to know and learn from you over these last three years.

Jane Gordon '11

One of the best parts of my high school experience has been having Mr. Davis there to make me think in new ways and consider new things, whether in two years of music theory, eighth grade music, conversations in the midi lab, or in GSA. The tolerant way in which he looks at the world and at people has made him an excellent example for so many people. I remember a GSA meeting in which we discussed homophobia and how to diminish it and Mr. Davis said that it was alright to hate homophobia, but that didn't mean necessarily that one should hate a homophobic person. This important distinction has stuck with me, and is one of the pieces of wisdom about how to treat and think about others that I will take away from Friends' Central.

Kendall Bedford '13

One thing I really love about Mr. Davis is his ability to make anything fun.

Jess Cooper '11

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is being real, for giving his whole self and nothing less every day.

Nicky Kirshner '14

One thing I'm thankful to Mr. Davis for is the inspiration he gave to me to become the best teacher I can. I plan to become a math teacher when I grow up and he really set a great model as a teacher and a person, and I can't thank him enough.

Zander Bashaw '14

I don't know Mr. Davis from any musical groups because I only perform in the shower where the shampoo bottles have nothing to say about my pre-pubescent voice attempting the high note in a Maroon 5 chorus. One thing I do know Mr. Davis well from, though, is GSA. In addition to always appearing happy and fun, he is one of the main voices in our GSA meetings, and is very serious about making a change in our society happen. Whenever I say hello to Mr. Davis, he smiles a genuine smile and says hello back. I glance at the tie around his shoulders, and move on feeling uplifted. Somehow even though there are so many people he has talked to and shared memories with, he can make everything seem very special. Even a freshman, who is only connected to him through a club, can share the satisfaction of having his presence in all aspects the community.

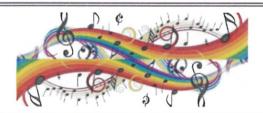


Liza Ewen (Upper School English Teacher)

Dear Mr. Davis--

While I am certain you have little doubt that your creation and loving support of the GSA has changed the lives of so many of your students, I want to be sure that you know it has made all the difference in my life as a teacher. When I first arrived at FCS at the age of 23, I was still growing up myself and trying to figure out just who I was becoming. I cannot begin to tell you what it meant to me as a young teacher to be able to hang a rainbow sticker on my classroom door--it was the beginning of something that has made all the difference to me. Your loving and tireless work on behalf of LGBTQ students has changed my world as much as it has changed theirs. It has made it possible for me to be an out teacher at Friends' Central, to bring my partner to each and every musical and play (she's a big fan who will miss you, too), and to be myself each and every day of my professional life. You have made this possible for me and for generations of teachers to come. You are a teacher to all of us, young and old, and you have taught me to stand proudly, speak loudly, and live honestly. Selfishly, I only wish you had also taught me to sing on key.

With so much love--Ms. Ewen



Doug Ross (Middle School Science Teacher)

Jim, I can not fully express how grateful I am that you have shared you talents, passion for beauty, fairness, joy, love, for embracing the journey that each of us (student and faculty) make to discover our true selves in every aspect, and for your leadership in creating a community that takes that journey of discovery on in such a intentional way. I have been privileged to be your colleague and your friend! I wish you every blessing and will miss you tremendously. I am sorry to be absent from your final concert since I will be in NYC at an environmental conference, but I have already begun shedding tears to add to the many that will be shed that night in your honor and in appreciation of all that you have so generously shared with us!

Blessings on you in your new path!

Thank you, Mr. Davis, for more than we can ever say!
We love you!



We Want Your Queer Words: Add your voice to this unique FCS archive!



How to Submit:

- Temail submissions to avernacchio@friendscentral.org
- ▼ Drop submissions in Mr. Vernacchio's mailbox or classroom.
- **▼** Give submissions to any GSA member.

What to Submit:

▼ Any kind of writing - poetry, personal essay, fiction, nonfiction, or two-dimentional artwork.

Some Ideas to Get You Started:

- ▼ Something you wrote for a class that speaks to LGBTQ issues.
- ▼ Your perceptions of queer issues at FCS. Is it a welcoming and supportive community? Is it both queer-friendly and queer-safe? Is it too focused on sexual orientation?
- ▼ Coming out anecdotes (someone coming out to you or you coming out to someone else) or imagine what it would be like if a close friend or relative came out to you.
- ▼ Your role as a straight ally in our community. What's it like to be a straight person in a school that deals with queer issues the way we do?
- ▼ A short story, poem, etc. that speaks to queer issues, experiences, or sensibilities.
- ▼ Your experience or observations of what it's like to be queer at FCS, at home, in the world, etc.
- ♥ Words of advice or comfort for those who are questioning or in the closet.

