

SPRING 2022

Wye River UPPER SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter Connecting Education and Community

Graduation Issue!



Congratulations Wye River Class of '22

by Tracie Spence, Director of Enrollment Management and Communications

Even the gloomy outdoor skies couldn't dampen the celebratory spirit of Wye River Upper School's graduation, with Head of School, Stephanie Borges Folarin, noting that "rain means good luck in many cultures".

As the raindrops fell outside, the graduates cast their rays of sunshine, beaming as they walked across the gym stage to receive their diplomas. This graduating class, which is the largest in our history, includes: Sam P., Lindsay M., Cameron K., Tate G., Adon L., Andrew G., Mark H., Jared M., Reni Z., Charlie M., Alex M., Ian A., Tyler J., Daniel M., Douglas H., Virgil R., Cole P., Nadia H.

Perseverance, growth and celebrating victories proved to be the recurring themes throughout the ceremony, as Board of Trustees Chair, Alexa Seip, encouraged students to pursue their dreams and commencement speakers Matt Donohue, '17, and Joe Leilich spoke about the challenges they faced as students with learning differences. Quoting Thomas Edison, Donohue encouraged the class of '22 to hold steadfast and follow their dreams. "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up," said Donohue. "Don't give up. Be that person who makes a change for the good."

Continuing on the theme, Leilich, First Commander of the American Legion Jeff Davis Post 18, stressed

the importance of recognizing "small victories" when faced with a challenge. A small victory can be any achievement no matter how small because "there are going to be times when you don't succeed the first time," said Leilich. "But you never give up, and never quit

This year's awardees:

- Chrissy Aull Founders Award for Experiential Learning: Mark H.
- Thomas F. West Achievement in Digital Arts & Technology Award: Sam P. & Virgil R.
- Senior Portfolio Award: Sam P.
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church Award for Loving Kindness: Alex M.

on your goal. And when you reach your goal, congratulate yourself for it."

Student speaker, Mark H., spoke fondly of the growth and memories he and his classmates shared over the years. "It's been a great learning environment and I can't wait to see where it goes next."

No doubt this spirited, determined class will continue to bring joy, humor and determination along with them as they celebrate the beginning of their many victories. Congratulations to the class of 2022!

What will our graduates do next?

architecture, healthcare, computer science, accounting, athletic training, art therapy, digital marketing, science, animal care, sports journalism, working for the National Security Agency, internships, and, in the true spirit of the Eastern Shore, working in the maritime industry

From Foundations to the Future: A Letter From the Head of School

Dear Friends of Wye River Upper School,

My first year as Wye River's new head of school has come to a close. What a momentous year it has been! Together, we've remained healthy and happy. The fear of the global pandemic has lessened, so with a bit of trepidation, we've stepped back into society, held hands, and given hugs. We've been the shoulders we need to cry on when there were tragedies near and far. We've helped each other prepare for oral presentations, complete college registrations, and practiced driver's license exam questions. In short, we've been everything to each other, and that hard work, kindness, and dedication have paid off. Smiling faces, joyous laughs, and calming sighs fill the halls of Wye River Upper School.

Being accepted into this vibrant community has been a joy! In partnership with the Board of Trustees, teachers, staff, and administration, I've been able to delve deeper into the school's strategic plans for the future, culture, and passions. In collaborations with students, parents,

and the Parent-Teacher Organization, I've learned more about what families desire for their high schoolers and what they need as parents of high schoolers. The all-encompassing love and dedication housed in this small school could sustain me over many lifetimes.

We've spent this year commending those who came before us for laying the foundation for our inspiring school. We've also spent this year dreaming of our future. As we step into our 20th year

of existence, we can proudly state that we are an institution that has honored its original mission. We are a school where students who learn differently discover through innovation, develop with rigor, and celebrate their strengths, all while preparing for success in college, career, and life.

Thank you for your continued care and support.

Gratefully,
Stephanie Borges Folarin



Back In-Person and Better Than Before

by Nicole Sophocles, Assistant Head of School

As we wrap up yet another school year, I would like to pause and reflect on some of the many accomplishments of our students and staff along with some program highlights.

We are fully back to our complete program offerings after two previous years of making adjustments, holding remote classes, and not being able to fully anticipate what would come next. We all learned from these two years. Technology skills increased, communications happened in many different ways, we found new ways to engage our learners and all of this benefited our program this school year. However, along with the positives of that unique time came the challenges of beginning a school year re-learning routines and adjusting to a full school/work day. We worked hard, yet gave grace, we had fun and rebuilt our in-person community in new ways.

All time highs

- 18 seniors graduated!
- 11th and 12th grade students earned 48 college credits through dual enrollment programs at Washington College, Chesapeake Community College, and Anne Arundel Community College.
- 7 students participated in a new honors program within English and history classes.
- New clubs were created to provide students with increased choices to further explore their interests. Clubs included strategy board games, community service, anime, arts, cursive writing, improv, and a student involvement committee.

This summer, program reviews will continue as we take a deep dive into our science curriculum and 21st century learning initiatives. I am also excited to add some dates in August related to college

planning and activities for our junior class and their families.

I wish everyone a relaxing summer and I hope you get to experience something new - a new place, friends and opportunities.



Celebrating 20 Years of Changing Student Lives

by Emma Mumma, Director of Development and Philanthropy

At Wye River Upper School (WRUS), community service and volunteerism are core values that we work to instill in our students. That is why having all WRUS students begin our 20th anniversary with 20 acts of kindness to give back to our community seemed like the perfect way to kick off the celebrations. Through environmental clean-ups, artwork for nursing homes, helping to feed children in need, volunteering with the Centreville Rotary, raising money for the Chester River Keepers (an organization chosen by students), and many more opportunities, students experience the power of kindness and generosity. As a final act of kindness for this year, the entire school community and several parent volunteers worked to install and update a disk golf course at Tuckahoe State Park.

The focus for our 20th is to ensure that the community knows who we are and what we do.

Wye River Upper School is the only high school on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that addresses the needs of students with learning differences. Even beyond that, to the Western Shore, the options are few and far between. This year provides an opportunity for us to extend our mission to reach the families who need a place like Wye River where their child can thrive. We appreciate your efforts to help us share our critical work with others so that we may continue to foster and transform the growth of student lives for many years to come.

On May 19th, former and current board of trustee members gathered at WRUS for a reunion to kick off the first 20th anniversary event. Old friends reunited and new friends were made as we celebrated our students' accomplishments and the growth of our organization, while looking ahead to the bright future the next 20 years will bring.

There are still celebrations to come! We hope you will join us on October 1st at the Talbot Country Club for our 20th Anniversary Gala. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at

wyriverupperschool.org/20th. If you are unable to attend but would like to contribute to celebrating our 20 years of changing student lives, please scan the barcode. Thank you for being a part of our school's success.



Former and current trustees gather to celebrate Wye River Upper School's 20th anniversary



'21- '22 School Year at a Glance



(left) Nasir M. '25 and Bridon L. '24 fishing the Corsica on our spring field day



(above) Logan B. '23 enjoys basketball during one of this winter's games



Geneya and Daria M. '23 proudly display their awards for Outstanding Academic Achievements in the Arts

Students complete 20 acts of kindness through community service to celebrate 20 years of WRUS

