

Wye River Upper School **CONNECTIONS**



20 YEARS



*of Changing
Lives*

A Letter from the Head of School



Head of School, Stephanie Borges Folarin



“Without a great deal of commitment and support from staff, parents, students, and supporters like you, Wye River Upper School could not be the inspiring and innovative place it has become.”

Greetings, Wye River Upper School Family and Friends,

Let me begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year filled with many successes and continued progress. Thank you for your endless support of our outstanding institution. Everyone at Wye River Upper School is eager to learn, grow and thrive in this new year; we wish the same for you. Without a great deal of commitment and support from staff, parents, students, and supporters like you, Wye River Upper School could not be the inspiring and innovative place it has become. I sincerely appreciate everything you do for the students, the staff, and our school! Thank you for your many contributions to our loving community.

We offer a robust academic program and opportunities to showcase talents in various activities, including theater, fine arts, music, and sports. We continually work to ensure our classes remain small so each student can develop strong relationships with their teachers. We also provide structure and accountability while helping our students balance freedom and responsibility. This newsletter invites you to celebrate the beauty and knowledge that fills our school. Enclosed, we honor our alums, community, founding, and future.

I want you to be the first to know of our expansion! Wye River Upper School will add an 8th grade in the 2023-2024 school year! Our staff is adept at creating educational experiences that support each student's emotional and social growth. We pride ourselves on providing a safe and nurturing learning environment and are excited to offer this unique educational experience through our 8th-grade program. Our 8th grade will uphold the same mission: Students who learn differently discover through innovation, develop with rigor, and celebrate their strengths at Wye River Upper School while preparing for success in college, career, and life. Our 8th Grade program will honor this mission by providing an immersive and innovative experience for our younger learners. We are thrilled to share more about this extension to our program in the coming months.

As always, you have an open invitation to stop by any time to see what we are up to in person. Thank you again for being a foundation part of our school family.

Happy New Year!

Stephanie Borges Folarin
Head of School



Inside

Wye River Currents

20th Anniversary

Trips and Traditions

Mission Moments

Alumni Spotlights

The Importance of Giving

Wish List



“
Being a parent is
not about perfection.
It’s about learning
lessons and moving
forward together
without judgment,
shame, or guilt.
”

Dr. Stephanie Akoumany
Founder/CEO of
Bloom Wellness Lab



WYE RIVER UPPER SCHOOL

CURRENTS

Parents: There is No Manual for Getting it “Right”

I remember the excitement of being a new mom and bringing home my oldest son from the hospital – I had been waiting to dive in and be the “perfect mom” for nine long months. Finally, my chance was here. My mother had come to stay with us for the first two weeks post-partum. I remember looking at my then-husband when she left, bursting into tears, saying, “I have no idea how to do this!” Twelve years later and two kids in, I’m still saying it... but now, instead of panicking as those words come out, I’ve added laughter, confidence, and a true assurance that nobody knows how to parent perfectly (because the “perfect parent” doesn’t exist!).

[Click to read full article.](#)

“
As parents, we walk the fine line be-
tween wanting children to create
their own journeys and sharing the
wisdom we wish we had when we
were their age... because let’s face it,
the art of raising children is not a one
size fits all.
”

Beth Anne
Dorman (Langrell)
President/CEO of
For All Seasons



Moving Beyond Perfectionism: 10 Ways To Mindfully Align With Your Neurodivergent Child

1. Hold space for your teen by showing them and sharing with them that you are there to listen to what brings them joy, their wins, aspirations, struggles, and challenges.
2. Ask your teen how they are feeling and what they need and from whom or where to thrive.
3. Ask your teen how they want to be labeled. Discuss why diversity, inclusion, equity, justice, and belonging matter in your home, prospective school, and the world.
4. Use your time to have more fun, respect each other’s energy levels, and recharge.
5. Be present during conversations and try to focus primarily on them. Openly acknowledge if you have to split your attention between them and another task if it’s extremely important. Calmly and kindly tell them why, and that you very much value their thoughts.
6. Observe their love languages, habits, hobbies, favorite music, colors, motivations, and goals so you can help make kind suggestions of ways they can design a life and learning plan of their dreams.
7. Seek support from schools like Wye River Upper School that offer individualized curriculum and small settings, environments that value diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging (DEIJB).
8. Move beyond labels and embrace that your child has a brain that helps them navigate the world differently. These divergent intelligences are gifts.
9. Share your child’s learning style with others with their permission. Allow for this to possibly change.
10. Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional separately and together for advice.

[Click to read full article.](#)



20 Years of Changing Lives

(Left) On behalf of the The Maryland General Assembly, Senator Adelaide Eckardt presented an official citation on the evening of October 1, 2022 to Stephanie Folarin, Head of School, Chrissy Aull, Founding Head of School, and Alexa Seip, Chair of the Board of Trustees, in recognition of Wye River Upper School's 20 years of dedication to changing the lives of students with learning differences through quality education tailored to each student's own unique talents and ambition. (Right) Guests bid on silent auction items including Smith Reed Smith Guitar, private catering by Gourmet By The Bay, vacation stays, and more.

Because of your support, our 20th Anniversary Gala netted a record-breaking amount of over \$105,000, all to benefit our mission and students! We had fun celebrating Wye River's 20-year legacy with an evening of dancing to live music from the Gold City Band, bidding on experiential silent auction items, and enjoying the delicious offerings from the Talbot Country Club executive chef and team. We are grateful to all of those who donated, attended, bid, or just helped spread the word to make this event an overwhelming success. Thank you for helping us celebrate this milestone in our school's history and for making a difference for our students today and for decades to come!



A school's legacy is visible in the health and welfare of its community. Wye River Upper School has educated, inspired, and supported students for 20 years and in September, we relished in the prosperity of our greatest legacy, our alumni, on the lawn of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. James Martinez and Nicole Sophocles were honored for their service of 20 years and Harry (Stoney) and Virginia (Jij) Duffey were presented with a plaque naming the MakerSpace Yard the "Duffey Yard" in honor of their years of continuous dedication. Families, friends, and teachers of old and new feasted on crabs provided by JR Thomas Seafood and other decadent treats by Humble Hearts and Main and Market.

(Right) WRUS community and alum gathered on September 10, 2022 at our inaugural Legacy Day event.

Trips and TRADITIONS

The entire student body traveled to Washington D.C. to learn about the Indigenous People of North America at the Museum of The American Indian on Indigenous Peoples Day.



By Katie Lillard, Director of Admissions

For 20 years, Wye River Upper School has committed to providing educational excellence and cultivating a culture of kindness that support our learners' needs. The traditions that our school developed in its young life have helped us define who we are in our approach and our character. One of the hallmarks of a Wye River Upper School education is experiential learning. The average year at Wye River boasts over 15 field trips that provide resources for real-world, hands on learning for our students. This year, these trips out of the classroom have included places like the Museum of the American Indian, Tuckahoe State Park, the Mutter Museum, Maryland Institute College of Art, Modern Stone Age Kitchen, election polling sites, the John Dickinson Plantation, and more. These trips outside of our classroom walls offer the added bonus of increased awareness of the world around us and the community building that comes from positive shared experience. But our favorite traditions aren't exclusive to field trips! Throughout the year, (Cont. Pg 10)



(Right) Wesley '26 and Rammy '23 enjoy pie during one of our favorite holiday traditions, Pie Day.

we host a variety of events that our students, faculty, and staff have come to cherish. Games of mat ball, the sharing of holiday pies, and participation in Centreville's annual holiday parade are among our favorite activities each fall. This spring, we look forward to an all-school trip to the African American Museum in DC, blue/white days, Corsica Day, and lots more. It's hard to say what exciting new trips we will add in years to come, but one thing is for sure, we thrive in and out of our building by giving our students unique learning experiences and opportunity for fun.

(Right) English students journaled and worked on creative writing pieces during our all school trip to Tuckahoe State Park.



ALUMNI Spotlight



Mark Homick '22 reunited with former WRUS teacher, Karen Gilbert, at the Annapolis School of Seamanship this fall.

Mark Homick '22

Mark Homick '22 recently attended the Master's 100 Ton Coast Guard license course at the Annapolis School of Seamanship in pursuit of his Coast Guard Captain's license. He passed all four challenging exams on the final day of class, thereby completing that portion of the application for his license. He is one of the youngest students to ever complete ASOS's Master's course. Mark's extensive boating experience on different size vessels and in both inland and coastal waters will allow him to apply for a larger license this June when he turns 19. Mark is well on his way to work in multiple positions in the marine industry, including charter captain and boat deliveries.



Tong '10 received her commercial helicopter pilot's license in December

Chloe Tong '10

The sky's the limit for Chloe Tong '10 who earned her commercial helicopter license in December of 2022. The thrill of flying with a private license for the last two years enlivened Tong to pursue flying as a full-time career. Chloe says that her passion for traveling led her to her first helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon, an experience that has stayed with her through her journeys around the world. With her commercial license, Chloe will be able to instruct, provide helicopter tours and charters, and even capture aerial photography for clients.



(Right) Jordan Edwards '17 and Chance at Talisman Therapeutic Riding.

Jordan Edwards '17

Jordan Edwards '17 started volunteering at Talisman Therapeutic Riding in Graysonville when she was a freshman student at Wye River Upper School. Jordan was later hired on as an Equine Lesson Lead Support and has now advanced to hold the position of an Assistant Barn Manager. Pictured here with Chance, Jordan says that her favorite thing about working at Talisman Therapeutic Riding are her colleagues and the time she is able to spend with the horses.

Every year, students in MakerSpace get busy designing and fabricating a float for Centreville's annual holiday parade. This year's illuminated light box float won the award for Best Overall.





WRUS theater students are inventive, expressive, and inspiring! In this exercise, pairs of students enacted two scripts written by their classmates. Each performance showed different interpretations of the same scripts, which called for use of props, inflection, eye contact and more.

Wye River Upper School is pleased to announce the addition of an 8th grade beginning in September

Expanding our impactful program into the 8th grade will allow us to continue our extraordinary academic and social-emotional work. This is a big moment for the Wye River Upper School community and our ever-growing commitment to cultivating the best in our students, helping them be excellent stewards of this world and, above all, the best version of themselves.

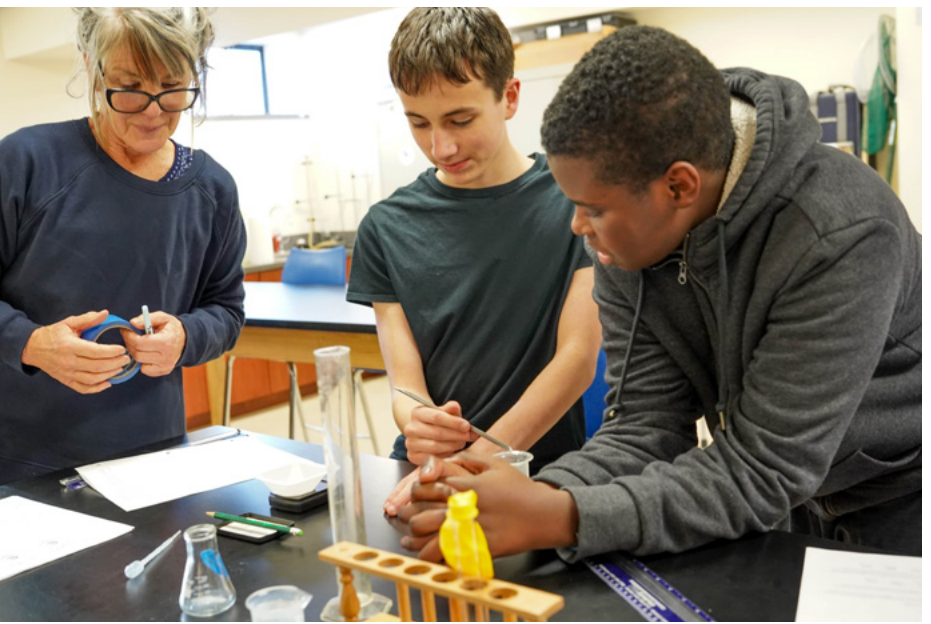
- Stephanie Folarin, Head of School



MISSION Moments

(Left) WRUS practices mindfulness: It is difficult to focus on things in life that we don't naturally enjoy- things that we find challenging, new, or uncomfortable. Often though, these very things are those which help us grow. In meditation, we strengthen focus and increase attention span; we add another valuable tool to our kit. Our students enjoyed yoga and meditation as an elective morning fitness activity this fall.

(Right) Mrs. Sullivan's science class studied cellular respiration in the lesson pictured above. To better understand how glucose is converted to carbon dioxide, students experimented with adding different concentrations of sugar to active yeast and measured the relative amounts of carbon dioxide produced.



From the Director of Philanthropy



Emma Rose Mumma, Director of Philanthropy

The Importance of Giving

When you ask our donors why giving to WRUS is meaningful to them, you will likely hear them say, “because I know my dollars are making a difference”. When you give to large corporations, it’s difficult to know how your gift is utilized. When you give a gift to WRUS, you can be assured that your contribution is directly impacting each of our students, programs, and teachers. We rely on gifts of all sizes to continue offering our high-quality, experiential learning environment. Donations, big and small, let our community know that others believe in our mission and demonstrate their support through active advocacy. We are consistently humbled and overflowing with gratitude for our loyal community of advocates. We thank you for your continued support!

Here are some ways you can help!
Make a gift here: <https://donorbox.org/wyeriverannual>.
If you are over 72, make a tax-free contribution through your IRA.
Share our mission with others.

If you have questions about giving to WRUS, please contact Emma Rose Mumma at 443-262-8256 or emmamumma@wyeriverupperschool.org.



“I know my dollars are making a difference.”

Support our school by purchasing from

our Wish List

Follow this [link](#) to find school supplies and educational tools for our classrooms that were specially requested by our teachers.





Wye River

UPPER SCHOOL

316 S. Commerce St.
Centreville, MD 21617

(410) 758-2922

www.wyriverupperschool.org