

Wye River UPPER SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter Connecting Education and Community



What's New at Wye River: Increasing Rigor and Depth of Study

By Nicole Sophocles, Assistant Head of School, College & Career Counseling

This fall brought some exciting new courses and programming to Wye River Upper School. Honors programming was introduced as an option for all English and history courses. The honors program allows a student to take a course for honors credit through enhancements to the class content, such as an increase in the rigor and depth of study. These courses are committed to challenging our students in preparation for higher education.

Along with the additional honors programming, new course electives have been added as an option for juniors and seniors. The science department now offers Plant and Animal Biology to address the needs and interests of our students who wish to continue

to advance their studies in biology. The history curriculum now includes Medieval History and the art department added a Graphic Design course. These additional elective courses are taught by teachers with expertise and passion for the content. Physics and Ceramics have also been added back into the programming.

Advisory, which all students participate in at the end of each day, has shifted focus to include increased direct instruction in academic planning, advocacy and content specific groups such as writing and math skills. The goal of advisory groupings is to be able to provide additional support in a student's area of need (writing, math, executive function skills) while also providing time to start

homework assignments, ask for help from teachers, and participate in college and career readiness activities. One example of this are the student led conferences. Students have been reflecting upon their own strengths and challenges within each class and guided their conference with their parents and teachers present. As we work as a schoolwide team to support student advocacy and each student's path to independence this is essential time to both support their individual progress and allow for students to practice these skills.

We continually reflect on our program, best practices, and ways to improve and enhance our students' learning experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.



Thomas, '23, leads troops in the construction of a new sensory trail at Maryland Therapeutic Riding.

A True Student Leader at Wye River: Thomas C. '23

By Tracie Spence, Director, Enrollment Management and Communication

Did you know that only 4% of Boy Scouts earn the highest achievement attainable? Wye River Upper School junior, Thomas Callahan, is only months away from being a part of this elite group as he works to earn his Eagle Scout badge with a project that will benefit those with physical and mental disabilities.

Thomas is a "reach for the stars" type of student who isn't easily defeated. As an honor roll student he never says "no" when asked to help with a project. This type of motivation and positive attitude are what makes him a true leader and also what inspired him to take on a huge task that will earn him his promotion to Eagle Scout.

It is a well-known fact that horseback riding is physically and mentally therapeutic. (continued on page 6)



Dear Friends,

For the last 19 years, Wye River Upper School has successfully supported the holistic growth of over 900 students. As we embark on our 20th year of existence, we can celebrate the accomplishments of the past and, with your continued support, launch ourselves into the future. We are enhancing our curricula to remain tech-forward, project-based, culturally aware, and student-centered. Through our intensive professional development program and our devotion to remaining up-to-speed on all research regarding the education of students with ADHD, dyslexia, and high-functioning autism, we've become wiser, more empathetic, and more profound thinkers.

We are continually focused on providing an appropriate education for our scholars, understanding that half of them will seek a four-year degree upon graduation. At the same time, the other 50% will choose to join the armed forces, a technical field requiring certification, or test the college waters by first attaining an associate's degree. Our academic program caters to our college-prep population as well as students ready to step into the world of work immediately after high school. We've purposefully maintained a low student-teacher ratio, so we can offer the individualized support our unique students need. Our dual-enrollment program with neighboring colleges, our MakerSpace building, and our volunteer/internship/apprenticeship program allow our students to explore the world beyond the classroom because we believe in experiential learning.

We are so grateful for the support of our community, both financially and in brain-power. We are thrilled, proud, and motivated to step into our 20th year with your ongoing partnership. Thank you for all you do! We look forward to learning and growing with you.

Respectfully,
Stephanie Borges Folarin
Head of School

Empowering Young Adults Through a Culture of Philanthropy

by Emma Mumma, Director of Development and Philanthropy and Emily Fryer, Development Associate

Wye River Upper School students are naturally empathetic. They join our community with individual stories about how their learning differences have affected their educational experience. Their stories are what unites them and makes them compassionate towards one another. These characteristics - empathy and compassion - serve as a tool when building relationships in school, career, and life. We believe these are also the attributes that build the framework for philanthropy in young adults.

Promoting a culture of philanthropy with teens, early on, can help them to develop a deeper sense of selflessness and leadership. Today, young adults are much more likely to become involved with helping others when they are given a choice in identifying their interests and passions, and when choosing how to volunteer or give to an organization. When your child feels in control of how they volunteer or contribute, it develops a sense of pride and ownership in their philanthropic giving. Developmentally, teens are in a stage where their thinking is far more complex. Their capacity for caring, philanthropic participation and

advocacy is deeper than ever before. We empower our students to make their own choices about how they give their time, talent, and treasure, and encourage them to establish a life-long pattern of giving.

Philanthropic behaviors are often learned at school - and at home. Wye River encourages a culture of philanthropy by requiring volunteer hours for graduation. Volunteerism at school plays a significant role in building a kind character, but engaging your child in family giving can be even more impactful. This holiday season, we encourage you to create new family rituals and traditions to give to those less fortunate. Involving your children in your charitable decisions and actions will give them the desire and skills needed to extend your family's commitment to being charitable and giving back. Students will also find more enjoyment in giving if they can collaborate with their peers or spend time with friends while volunteering.

We all want to raise our children to be kind, generous, and active community

members. Involving children early and building a culture of philanthropy as a family will build and instill a sense of gratitude, fulfillment, and empowerment in your child.

We hope in this season of giving your whole family feels the warmth that follows acts of kindness and giving back.



Ty, '23, and Chris, '23, fill Wye River's Loving Kindness Food Pantry at St. Paul's Church in Centreville, MD.

YOUR IMPACT

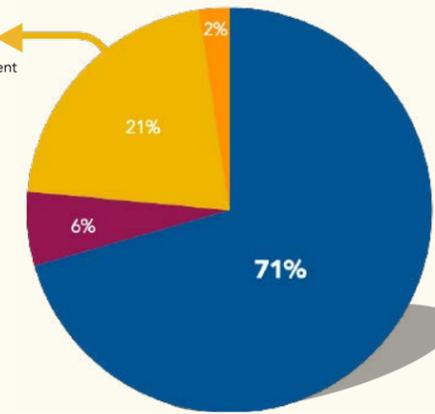
June 2020 - June 2021

Income

Fundraising Income Breakdown

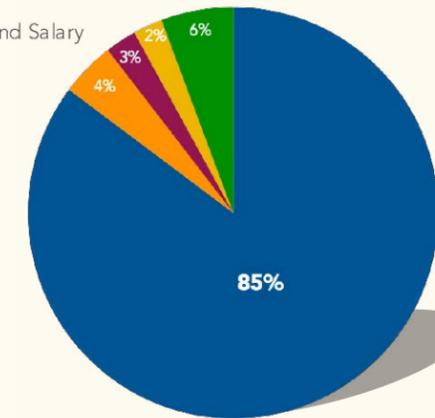
Annual Fund - \$223,997
Financial Aid Fund - \$233,827
Chrissy Aull Professional Development Fund - \$13,146
Donated Goods In-Kind - \$1,530
Total - \$472,500

- Tuition Income
- Program and Transportation Fees
- Fundraising Income
- Other Income

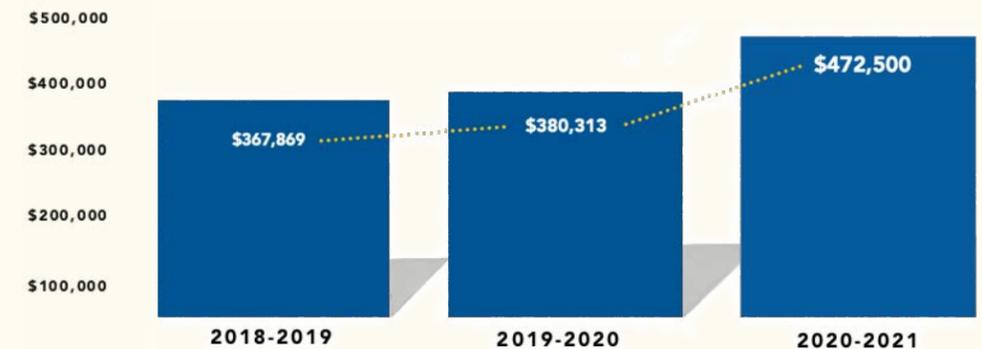


Expenses

- Program, Professional Development, and Salary
- Miscellaneous
- Operational
- Marketing/Development/Admissions
- Property



When we need you most, you are there!



What demonstrates a community's strength most is when faced with adversity - does your community come together or divide? Ours unites. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, you willingly and generously provided us with the support we needed to cover the costs that came with keeping our students, faculty, staff, and families safe. Your gifts have enabled us to exceed our fundraising goals, and open new doors of opportunity and growth. You stepped up when we needed you most, and **we are so grateful.**

Note from Head of School

Dear Friends of WRUS,

Forgive these words, for they are a humble woman's feeble attempt to share a depth of appreciation that isn't easily measured. Even during an economic crisis caused by a global health pandemic, you selflessly gave to our community. Your generosity continues to uplift our spirits, financially stabilize our school, and inspire our students. Without your sacrifice, we would not be able to fulfill our mission and purpose. Thank you for supporting us as we continue growing our academic programming, expanding our outplacement and graduate support program, and providing invaluable life and educational experiences for our deserving students. Your friendship and support are greatly appreciated.

Warmly,
Stephanie Borges Folarin
Head of School

IMPACT REPORT

We extend our deepest gratitude for the gifts received from the following individuals and foundations from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. The gifts listed are both restricted and unrestricted. Your contributions, big or small, have made a difference. Thank you for your generous support of our students and mission.

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Thank you to our Faculty and Staff for their 100% giving participation!

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A note of gratitude from the Director of Development and Philanthropy

The names that fill these pages are the reason we are able to do what we do at Wye River Upper School. Your gifts demonstrate that you see the full potential in our students that we see too. You understand the profound and critical need of our mission. And, you care deeply about educating bright minds that will best succeed when their learning styles are recognized and met. Each of you has a personal reason that you make the choice to give to Wye River Upper School, and we couldn't be more grateful for that choice.

I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to get to know some of you. The unwavering support of our community of friends has helped us weather the storm of the pandemic in strength; we could not do it without your generosity. As we embark on our twentieth year as a school, we reflect on you and our gratitude for your steadfast support throughout the years. I look forward to celebrating this milestone with you.

Witnessing the growth and transformation of the students that fill our classrooms and hallways, is my greatest joy. Our doors are always open to you, and we hope you will visit to feel this joy for yourself and see the impact of your contributions.

With gratitude,

Emma Rose Mumma

Director of Development and Philanthropy



Jon Baker, teacher, and Daria '23

A note of gratitude from Wye River Upper School's Board Chair

I am grateful to see the extensive list of friends, family, and community members who have given so generously to Wye River Upper School's mission and students. Your contributions have made a significant impact on our ability to provide the well-rounded educational experience that is unique to Wye River. You have allowed WRUS to staff its classrooms with deeply dedicated educators who deliver a rigorous and engaging curriculum. Your financial aid donations have opened the doors to an education which otherwise would not be possible for many. Thank you.

This year began a new chapter for Wye River Upper School as we welcomed new Head of School, Stephanie Borges Folarin into our community. Her vast knowledge, diverse experience, and great energy, sets the path for a bright and secure future ahead. I encourage you to get to know her and her exciting vision for the school.

Thank you for extending your generosity to this critical mission.

With my deepest thanks,

Alexa Seip

Board Chair

Wye River Upper School works to be as accurate as possible with our information.

If you see any errors, please contact Director of Development and Philanthropy, Emma Mumma, at 443-262-8291 or email at emmamumma@wyeriverupperschool.org

Man's - and Student's - Best Friend, Archie

by Emma Mumma, Director of Development and Philanthropy



One of the reasons that Wye River Upper School is so unique is because of the environment and climate we provide. The sunlight that pours through our historic windows offers a friendly warmth, and the small class sizes enable open and in-depth discussions. These are just a few of the ways in which the climate and culture at Wye River provides a safe and nurturing learning environment for our students. But, what radiates more joy and happiness than a dog?

Meet Archie, the dog child of Wye River Director of Operations and Athletics, Ron Vener. This Goldendoodle bundle of fur accompanies Mr. Vener to work each day with the primary goal of bringing comfort and support to the Wye River Upper School community. "He's become a stress reliever for me," says sophomore, Avery. "When he comes into the classroom, he's a good support."

Archie has not only built relationships

with and attachments to most of the students, but with the faculty and staff as well. "When I come into work, the first thing I hear is Archie's footsteps coming to greet me. I just love him!" says Executive Assistant, Zara Cowan.

Archie is aspiring to be a therapy dog so that he can offer additional support to the students of Wye River Upper School. Despite his lack of formal training, many students find Archie's presence to be therapeutic and a part of their daily routine. "I start my day by playing ball with him in the gym, and it begins my day right," remarks freshman, Gabriel. "Archie's pretty cool. He lifts your spirits!"

Archie brings the gifts of laughter and joy to this holiday season and every day in between. "When you see a dog run past your classroom, it just makes you laugh," says freshman, William. A quick pet on the head between classes helps to lower student anxiety - and Archie loves it, too.

A True Student Leader at Wye River: Thomas C., '23 (continued)

When Thomas visited Maryland Therapeutic Riding in Crownsville, he found out that there was an opportunity to improve the trails by adding additional stations. The only problem was that the area where the stations would be built was wooded, and the project would require significant money, time, and labor to clear out the brush and to construct the new stations. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Thomas decided that this would be a perfect project for him to earn his Eagle Scout. What he didn't realize was the extent of the planning, fundraising, and documentation that was required on his part.

Thomas submitted his project proposal to build two new sensory stations - a giant PVC pipe xylophone to incorporate music and 9 three-foot noodle stations - to the Boy Scouts and it was approved. Then, the real work began. Thomas and his father set up a Go Fund Me page with a goal of raising \$1,400, while

also contacting companies to donate product and recruiting volunteers. He exceeded his goal by 35% and was able to get organizations to donate mulch, food and supplies. He was also able to recruit enough volunteers to complete the project in two days.

The end result? A completed project, two new stations on the trail and many happy clients. But, Thomas still has more work to do before he receives his Eagle Scout badge. He still has to analyze the project and describe the challenges he faced. According to Thomas, the most difficult part of the installation was lifting a 300 pound piece to fit into six foot holes in the ground. He also underestimated the amount of mulch that was needed.

Thomas, who hopes to have his Eagle Scout in eight months, is already thinking about his next big goal - attending college. He hopes to attend a Navy school with the assistance of financial aid that the Boy Scouts offer to members who earn their Eagle Scout badge. There's no doubt in our minds that Thomas will be a success no matter what he does or where he goes in life.



New sensory-station built by Thomas, '23, and volunteers

The Linguist and the Legend

by Tracie Spence, Enrollment Management and Communications

Most of us have a difficult time mastering one language let alone six! Wye River Spanish teacher, Philip Swann, is not only fluent in Spanish and English, but also speaks French, Arabic, Portuguese, and Dutch. Ironically, he claims that Portuguese was the most difficult for him to learn because he had a hard time keeping the languages separate. Because he speaks so many languages, it's not surprising to know that Philip is a world traveler and has set foot in Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Canada and Morocco.

Mr. Swann feels a deep connection with Wye River students as he had similar challenges when he was their age. He struggled with "nervous energy" and anxiety for years, but wasn't diagnosed with ADHD until he was in high school. Despite not having accommodations nor the help of medication, Mr. Swann did well in

school. He hopes that his students will use him as an example of what is possible, especially when it comes to languages. "If someone like me who is just like them (his students) can learn six languages, then they can easily learn Spanish," says Swann.

Wye River Upper School's music teacher, Mr. Bill Drazga, has three main loves in his life: contemporary, classic music; sports (go Green Bay!); and the two women in his life - his daughter and his new wife!

As a life-long teacher, one of the biggest challenges for him has been to provide excellent instruction to students with varied ability and knowledge levels. Mr. Drazga credits his success to his ability to acclimate and change to accommodate his environment, rather

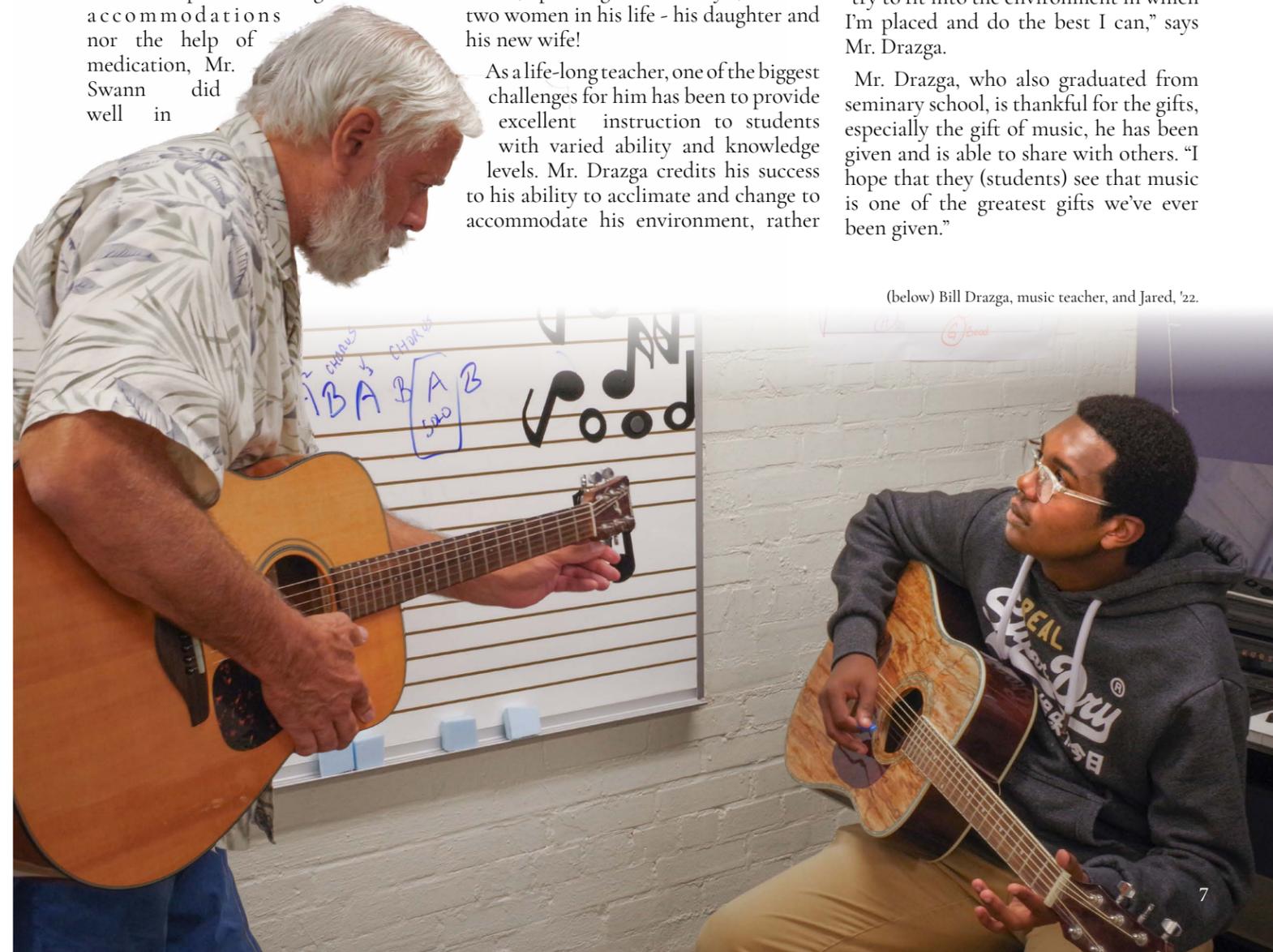
than his environment adapt to him. "I try to fit into the environment in which I'm placed and do the best I can," says Mr. Drazga.

Mr. Drazga, who also graduated from seminary school, is thankful for the gifts, especially the gift of music, he has been given and is able to share with others. "I hope that they (students) see that music is one of the greatest gifts we've ever been given."

(below) Bill Drazga, music teacher, and Jared, '22.



Philip Swann, Spanish teacher, and Sam '22



Join us as we celebrate 20 years of educating over 900 bright minds!
To commemorate this milestone we invite you to contribute towards Wye River Upper School's 20th Anniversary Endowment Fund which will secure the future of our school to ensure we continue to change the lives of students for decades to come.
To make a contribution or for more information, please visit wyeriverupperppperschool.org/20th.



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