



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

JUNE 2010 Volume 16,9

On June 9, seventeen students graduated from Birchwood School - the largest graduating class in our 26-year history. In addition, this inspiring and tasteful ceremony was held in on our new campus - thank you Ms. Samarin, Mrs. McNaughton and Mrs. Debelak for turning our "pumpkin" into a grand carriage. This final issue of the 2009-2010 Clipboard will spotlight alumni news including the matriculation of the Class of 2010. In addition, we have a few more academic awards to report, and Mr. D has a final essay entitled Taking the High Road.

Alumni News

Students in the class of 2010 are now alumni! They are off to the following high schools:

Hawken: **Shawki A, Carl C, Grant F, Clare P, Ben W**

St. Edwards: **Mahmoud A, Zach I, Miguel P**

Magnificat: **Miranda M, Nardine T**

Hathaway Brown: **Sun Lu S**

Lake Ridge Academy: **Zaeem M**

Lutheran West: **Tia L**

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics: **M. Munim**

Rocky River: **Peter C**

St. Ignatius: **Nathan C**

Westlake: **Deepak K**

Congratulations Graduates!

Philip Wong '97 was the alumni speaker at the graduation ceremony. Philip attended University School and went on to complete a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Caltech in 2005. In a change in career direction, Philip went to work for HSBC in investment banking where he spent time in London and New York. After three years Philip went back to school to pursue an MBA. Last month, he graduated from Harvard Business School and was a recipient of the Dean's Award. In August, Philip will be starting with an investment management firm in California. It was great to see his brother, **Ben Wong '00**, who was also at graduation. Ben will be starting his 3rd year of medical school at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine. Both Wong brothers remarked at the great changes at Birchwood and the impressive speeches by the graduates.

Other alums have sent in some news. News "from" an alumnus was sent directly in by them. News "about" was sent in by a family member or friend.

From **Joe Chu '85**: I have gone back to my old law firm. The bio from the website..."Joseph is a corporate and securities attorney in Wilson Sonsini Goodrich

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Upcoming

Friday, June 18
Parent Committee Mtg

Friday, July 16
First Annual Golf Classic

Wednesday, August 25
First Day of School

Current Furniture/

Hardware Needs

Keep your eyes open for...

- File cabinets
with 4/5 drawers,
in good condition
- Bookshelves
- Compact floor podiums
- and if you stumble
upon...a playground -
for free, or less 😊



& Rosati's Palo Alto office. He advises companies on general corporate matters, including formation and operation, corporate governance, intellectual property and licensing, and employment-related matters." I heard from sister **Rose Chu Beck '88** and husband, Rex, that Birchwood is doing well! (*Ed. Joe was Birchwood's first graduate.*)

From **Andre Burkholder '88**: Andre writes that he is a Health Management Consultant with the Health and Group Benefits practice in the Cleveland office of Towers Watson. This involves the strategic design, implementation, evaluation and integration of health & productivity programs for Fortune 500 companies. Andre and his wife, Danielle, are expecting their second child, to join big brother Jaiden (2 1/2 years old), in September.

From **Rebekah Franick McConnell '90**: We had a baby girl and named her Scout after the character in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Some days I find myself dancing and reciting Shel Silverstein (which shocks me that I still have some memorized after all these years.) My #1 choice for her first birthday presents are Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein.

From **Christy Debelak Neider '90**: I'm working slowly but steadily at a Phd in education at the University of Pittsburgh. My studies focus on teaching and learning for intellectual depth, bridging history/philosophy of education with instruction and learning in the classroom. My husband, Sam, and I have an almost 3 year old, Jonah, who will either be a musician or electrician given his propensity (and obsession with) cords, wires, and guitars. I remain a loyal Cleveland fan, though it's very difficult to fight the black and gold tide here in the 'Burgh.

From **Joseph Parrino '90**: This year I received my teaching license in secondary social studies (big surprise right?) through Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN. (*Ed. Joe has other degrees from CWRU and the University of Illinois.*) For about four years prior, I was a reporter for a daily called *The Kentucky New Era* and a weekly called *The Fort*

Campbell Courier (an Army publication). In the meantime, Emily, Stephen and I are living life in the slow lane in Hopkinsville, KY. We like it and intend to stay here a while.

From **Paul Hsiung '91**: I hope all is well with the upcoming school year. Recently I have moved to San Jose to start a new job with Adobe Systems Inc. as a software engineer. (*Ed. Paul recently donated Adobe software to Birchwood. A hearty public thank-you, Paul! Paul attended Carnegie Mellon.*)

From **Coriander McNaughton Friess '91**: Cori wrote in February that she was getting her head shaved on March 17 for the annual St. Baldrick's fund raiser for childhood cancer. Cori recently helped at Birchwood by serving as a judge for the speech contest/fest.

About **Emily Grabo Waldal '94**: Mrs. D is proud to report that Emily is our first alumni teacher. As computer teacher and director of technology, she is bringing BW staff and students into the cutting edge of 21st century skills. She will present at the August *Technology for Teachers* workshop sponsored by the Cleveland Council of Independent Schools. Emily helps manage the alumni data base and our Facebook page.

From **Crystal Little Bernier '94**: We happily report that we have a baby boy named Joshua Aaron Bernier who is nearly 6 months old now.

From **Jason Stojkov '94**: ...I am married and about to hit 30 (yikes). I am part of a non-profit summer camp for children who have health issues (such as cystic fibrosis, cancer) which prevent them from going to a regular camp...I have been working at a local wallcovering/wallpaper design studio for 5 years now and I know Birchwood helped me get there. Thanks again for a great education and for reading aloud great books like *Maniac Magee*.

From **Eva Ryckman '95**: I'm not doing anything too exciting, just my Radiology Residency in PA. (*Ed. Pretty exciting!*) I look forward to seeing what others from my time at Birchwood are doing.



From **Hannah Debelak Birchman '96**: On November 1, we welcomed Evelyn to our family. Since then I've been on indefinite leave from teaching. In my "spare" time I am developing a business from my home of handcrafted baby items. In the fall I will continue with my business, tutor, and mentor Teach for America Social Studies teachers.

From **Sara Parker '96**: I am working on finishing up my PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from University of Illinois in a little over a month, and then I will be heading to Rutgers University for a postdoctoral position. In New Jersey, I will get to hang out with **Jeff Parker '00**, who is finishing up his second year in a PhD program at Princeton in plasma physics. **Alex Parker '95** started a job a few months ago at a law firm in San Francisco after graduating from University of Chicago Law School last June.

From **Linda Hung '97**: I'm in the applied math PhD program at Princeton, doing research that involves computer simulations of materials at the atomic and quantum level. I'm nearing the end of my fifth year here, and I'm trying to graduate by the end of this summer. With the writing and the research, work has been keeping me really busy lately. By the way, I just saw the video on Facebook of Mr. D singing with students. It brings back great memories...

About **Megan Tzeng '97**: Megan volunteers to help manage our alumni data base. This fall she will continue her medical school education at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine.

From **Bernard Chu '98**: I'm in my 4th year of graduate school trying to get a PhD in chemical and systems biology at Stanford. It's going well enough, it just takes so long! ...Family is doing fine. I married my high school sweetheart about 2 years ago. I like to keep an eye on Birchwood goes-on even though I can't really interact much from all the way out here. It seems like things are going pretty well!

From **Owen Matthews '98**: Owen let us know that he is working for the Marathon Oil Corporation in Houston,

Texas. For the past two years he has been an IT Business Analyst - Corporate Client Services. He works as a project manager for IT related projects initiated by either the Tax or Financial Planning Department.

From **Elyse Meena '99**: I'm studying filmmaking at the London Film Academy and just finished filming my graduation film as director. I'm currently finishing editing the film (and all the little obstacles that come with it) and am starting to look for jobs in casting agencies and get my visa figured out so I can work here... and hopefully work and live here permanently. Wow, I have to say that I'm honored that you would ask me to come and talk. I would love to next time I'm in town, and I might make a special trip for it. *(Ed. Hint, hint to all alumni - come back to talk!)*

About **Keenan Diab '02**: Keenan will be a senior at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.).

About **Hannah Miller '04**: Hannah finished her second year in the architectural program at Syracuse University. This summer Hannah is working at Birchwood assembling our Wood Math Program and tutoring students. **George Bashour '08** (current St. Ignatius student) is another alum who will work as a summer math tutor at Birchwood. We're looking ahead to expand these options for next summer.

About **Alex Phillips '04**: "...a rising Jr. at Grinnell College, Alex will be attending the U of Iowa's Writer's Workshop summer program in Dublin, Ireland – followed by a semester abroad with Grinnell-in-London."

About **Ramsey Ataya '05**: Ramsey received the Layden Prize scholarship from St. Ed's last spring. He is currently at Cornell.

About **Tess Bindernagel '05**: Says Marie Kittredge, "As a parent of alums **Sam ('07)** and **Jacob ('09) Broida**, I was thrilled to find that alum Tess Bindernagel is our excellent experienced cox of our 8 man/women's crew (rowing) on the Cuyahoga this summer. Tess is an experienced rower, having rowed coxed and



coached, all through high school and at Miami U, where she just finished her freshman year.”

From Drew Koechley '06: I've seen that Birchwood seems to be doing quite well. That's exciting! I just wanted to let you know that the time I spent at your school was truly indispensable. Thank you! Next year, I will be attending Ohio State as part of the Art Scholars program and I have already been admitted into the Fisher School of Business.

From **Omar Diab '06:** I got an early acceptance letter for Stanford yesterday, so I'm pretty psyched right about now :) Just thought you'd like to know. (*Ed: Omar has kept in touch so he knew I was prodding him to keep me up to date. Everyone else in this class, the same goes for you i.e. We like to know! Omar will be attending Stanford.*) Also from **Omar: Ani Dasarathy '08** and I made it to the semi-final round in the U.S. Physics Team competition. We placed among the top 150 physics students in the nation out of the more than 3,000 who took the preliminary exam.

About **Alex Lavisky '06:** This came from his sister, his dad, *The Plain Dealer, Cleveland.com* and local channels on June 8th/9th when the news hit the streets! Alex was drafted by the Cleveland Indians in an 8th round draft. St. Edwards, with Alex as catcher, won the Division I championship this year.

About **Margret Erlendsdottir '07:** Margret made her Cleveland Orchestra debut with a performance of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. at the *Side by Side* concert on March 9. She is the principal keyboardist of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra and attends Hawken School.

About **Thomas Wasserbauer '09:** From his dad to Mrs. Miller... “Thomas received special awards this year in Latin, English, and of course, History. He also received an award for making the Honor role the first 3 quarters.”

Keep sharing your news everyone. We will continue to print an alumni section in future issues of the

Clipboard. See the Birchwood website to update your information and to keep abreast of Birchwood's development. Everyone is looking forward to seeing you on Facebook! Mrs. D.

Academic Awards

Ohio State Science Fair Awards

Both **Dhweeja D** and **Vinny K** received Superior Awards (top) at the Ohio State Science Fair in Columbus on May 8. In addition, they were nominated for Young Scientist Awards. However, because they were not high school age, they were not advanced to the Intel Science Fair. (We will check back with them when they are in high school.)

The Ohio Academy of Science has invited Birchwood School to apply for the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Youth Science Opportunities.

OhioView Satellites Geospatial Technology Conference

Terri Benko, representing the OhioView Satellites Geospatial Technology Conference, presented trophies to **Hassan S** —1st place winner in the 7-9th grade division. (How do different ground covers affect the temperature of the earth?) and **Hannah Y**— 2nd place winner in the 7-9th grade division (How does cloud cover affect surface temperature?) There are photos of Birchwood students from the 2009 and 2010 conference on the Satellites website <http://satellitesk12.org>. Look for Dr. C's blog. Also some on the Flickr link: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/50202373@N03/sets/72157623936631559/>.

Ohio Celebration of Poets

Several students have poems published in the 2010 Ohio Celebration of Poets. Fifth grade winners are **Alexis H, Vinny K, Grace X, Anna H, Darius Z, Adam I, Maya F, Ammar M, Anthony C, Prathna K, and Pheby L**. Sixth grade winners are **Kareem T, Alex H,**



Nate C, Cameron S, Shan S, Naomi W, Kavya R, Katelyn V, Clive C, Dhweeja D Sachi G, Christine B, Jorgen K, Peter A, Hajira A and Dalya A. In the 7th and 8th grade the winners are: **Nathan C, Shawki A, Carlf C, Peter C, Munim, Miguel P, LuLu S, Deepak K, Tia L, Miranda M, Zaeem M, Nardine T, Sam Z, Hassan S, Sunny R, Vikas N, Trevor L, Alex P, Sean F, Amir F, Alexander I, Sarah C, Hannah Y.**

Power of the Pen

The 2010 state finals were held at The College of Wooster on May 21. Out of 355 seventh grade students representing the 280 schools in Ohio, **Trevor L** (7th grade) qualified for the “power round” of writing and emerged with a twelfth place state medal.

Presidential Physical Fitness Awards

The Presidential Physical Fitness Test is comprised of five events: push-ups, sit-ups, one-mile run, V-sit and reach, and the shuttle run.

Presidential Award Winners

(>85 percentile in all 5 events)

Alex D, Chester H, Sarah M, Emma P, Alexis H, Maya F, Alex P, Vinny K, Grace C, Bella M, Sarah D, Sunny R, Clare P, Sophia C, Abigail M, Elizabeth P, Sahej B, Sachi G, Shawki A, Zaeem M, Miguel P, Grant F, Nathan C, Miranda M, Maide S, Arjun B, Haley Y.

National Award Winners

(>50 percentile in all 5 events)

Dalya A, Sarah C, Sue R, Hannah Y, LuLu S, Nardine T, Eric H, Zuha J, Alia B, Channin M, Layla N, Farah S, Annessa W, Dharma N, Shruthi R, Hadi B, Avi B, Cameron K, Olivia S, Yamenah A, William L, Sofia R.

Cricket Writing Contest Winners

In March, the third through fifth graders entered a story-writing contest in which they were asked to write about a rescue. **Avi B** won first place for his story entitled “My Dad Saves the Day.” Additionally, two students received Honorable Mention awards: **Maya D** for “The True Hero”

and **Sophia C** for “Saving a Puppy.” These writers’ names and stories will appear in the July/August issue of Cricket magazine.

History Day Anecdote

As many of you read in a prior Clipboard, the historical paper **Amir F** wrote for National History Day advanced to the national competition in June. He wrote the paper about Garrett Morgan, a notable Clevelander who invented the gas mask and the forerunner to the modern day traffic signal. He was a prolific inventor who persevered against racial prejudice to lead an extremely successful life. As part of the research process, Amir sought out interviews and through dogged detective work found the contact information for Garrett Morgan’s granddaughter who is the director of outreach programs at Kent State University. She spoke to Amir at length on the phone and then warmly invited him to visit her at her home. By chance, Ms. Morgan’s brother was in town visiting. He clearly remembered his grandfather because he was fourteen when Garrett Morgan passed away. They had many warm and vivid memories to tell Amir, as well as personal family photographs and treasured family artifacts. One of the first successful products Garrett Morgan invented was a hair straightening solution and Sandra had an original bottle of the product, one of only a very small number still in existence. It was a great experience to talk with them both and they added a wonderful personal touch to the historical research.

OH WAIT!!! STOP THE PRESSES! THIS JUST IN!

We just heard from **Katelyn V** who is at the International Future Problem Solving Bowl in Madison, Wisconsin. She took 2nd place in the **whole wide world** in the individual competition! Woo-hoo!!!



COMPETENCY AND MOTIVATION

Part VIII

A Growth Mindset – Taking the High Road

“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them.” George Bernard Shaw

During this past year, we reviewed briefly Dr. Carol Dweck’s popular new book *Mindsets: The New Psychology of Success*. The book’s theme focuses on the *growth mindset* and how to teach children to view opportunity, achievement, and success as things that are within their own control. The book explains that a history of one’s accomplishments is related more closely to the attitude and effort of personal achievement ethics, than it is to factors outside of one’s control – heredity, environment, chance.

I believe a *growth mindset* is particularly important amidst cultural pressures and tendencies that allow children to become victims of their circumstances and to blame people and places for their own hardship, failure, and disappointment. The theme is played out nightly in the news. You can hear it from children, young adults, and often parents, who are looking to avoid personal struggles or responsibility. Dweck would categorize this outlook on life as the result of a *fixed mindset*, a mindset that says, “Without the right environment, or people, or money, I am powerless, a victim of my circumstances, a prisoner of my personal history.”

My observation during my 30+ years in education is that this attitude seems to be gaining more and more traction among our youth. If young people aren’t careful, this thinking can create a form of 21st century slavery, a bondage to the assumption that we are powerless until someone or some program gives us what we want. To counter this general trend it’s important that we teach our children the attitudes and habits of the *growth mindset*. We should help them emulate the attitudes and work ethic of the wonderful success stories that surround us.

Like the story of Melinda, a teenage girl I met 20 years ago. She was attending Case Western Reserve University on a full scholarship, yet she had been educated in one of Cleveland’s poorest performing schools. I asked her, “How did you do it? Why didn’t you drop out like so many other girls from your neighborhood? Why weren’t you overwhelmed by the debilitating circumstances surrounding you?” She gave me a knowing smirk and said, “My Mom woulda’ killed me!” She went on to explain that her mother accepted no excuses for poor academic performance. When Melinda griped about poor teachers, her mother shot back, “How does a poor teacher keep you from studying or getting help from tutors?” If Melinda complained that the other students didn’t care about school and teased her when she took school seriously, Momma shot back without mercy, “They are losers. Do you think they have any kind of meaningful future? Do you think their opinions mean anything or have any other purpose except to tear you down and make you like them?” Melinda looked up at me and said, “Momma usually won the arguments . . . and here I am today.”

A recurring theme in my middle school classes is “take charge.” I often ask my students, “What are your goals? What challenges are before you? Are you facing problems that need to be resolved?” Then I show them how to “attack,” how to get the bottom of these issues and forge a strategy to move forward. From my experience, young people love this kind of talk. They are inspired and ready to work. They want to assume control of their lives. With encouragement and support from those who love them, they are completely capable of taking charge. We just need to show them how.

If we help our children see our great country as a field of opportunity, they can, through effort and struggle, reach their highest ambitions. But if they are guided by self-indulgent cultural trends, our young people will find themselves in a swampy marsh, unable to move and a target of predators.

For more essays, visit Chuck’s blog at
www.birchwoodschool.org/blog