

CS Bids Farewell to an Original

Charlie Holland, Co-Founder and Trustee Retires

On behalf of Community School and the Board of Trustees, thank you for your many years of service to Community School. We wish you the best in your retirement.

Little did I know back in 1971 that I would ever be writing this letter. As I have said several times, our small group of founders had the expectation that perhaps Community School would serve its purpose and survive but half a dozen years. Instead, we are about to celebrate our fiftieth birthday! And we are launching a campaign to allow for an additional fifty years.

My oldest daughter, Sandy, was one of the three 'founding' students of Community School, but it is Morgan who probably holds the Holland record, having attended for some eleven years. Brian and Amy, along with Sandy and Morgan, all credit Community School with teaching them that 'it is fun to know stuff'. The result is that they all know a lot of 'stuff', which perhaps accounts for them turning out to be very successful as the chef/owner of a restaurant, a law school full professor, the executive director of a non-profit, and project manager for a huge national business. Thank you Community School!

And I have been on the Board of Trustees of Community School for most of its fifty years, chairing the Board more than once. I'm not exactly sure of how often because I filled unexpired terms a couple of times. What is important to me, however, is what Community School has given to me, in addition to educating my four children, it's given me friends, colleagues, fun, and an association with an educational institution that I am extremely proud to be a part of for so many years. In addition, probably because of my age, I seem to have become the unofficial school historian. In short, I am the best advertiser that Community School has ever had.

I hope that you will keep me in relationship with the school and the organization as much as possible. You have been an incredibly important part of my life and I hope that will not end.

With my profound appreciation and affection,
Charles H. Holland, Ph.D.



Bilingual Storytime

Opening our doors and increasing diversity



Bilingual Storytime is a biannual event that invites preschool age children, not currently enrolled at Community School, to join us for a story in English and Spanish. Each child is paired with a middle school student to read an illustrated story and then work on a craft. Every participant receives a copy of the book to take home.



The program has become a favorite over the years as it offers our middle school students an opportunity to apply their Spanish skills and mentor younger children. It also opens our doors to a Spanish speaking community, offering CS an opportunity to increase inclusivity and diversity. In fall of 2020, the program continues but has shifted to an online format via Zoom. We hope to resume an in-person program as soon as we are able.

Community News

2020

Stay Rooted, Branch out

Connecting

Hands-On Learning During a Time of Social Distancing and Isolation

As health mandates due to COVID-19 closed schools across the country in March of this year, we found ourselves in an uncharted territory. With nearly 10 weeks remaining on the school calendar, how would we complete the academic year? How would we transfer a hands-on, experiential curriculum to a computer screen? And most importantly, how would we maintain the connections that foster social emotional growth, and support our students and community during a time of great stress and uncertainty?

Continued on next page.



World Peace Day tiles created collaboratively by two students during remote learning



COMMUNITY SCHOOL
7815 Williamson Road
Roanoke, VA 24019
540-563-5036
CommunitySchool.net
Development@CommunitySchool.net

Connecting

Hands-On Learning During a Time of Social Distancing and Isolation

Recognizing the vital role of the classes and activities that offer the greatest connection, we focused on maintaining enrichment classes such as art, music, mindfulness and drama as well as creating a curriculum that would foster togetherness. While our physical campus remained closed, teachers found new ways to help students experience a hands-on curriculum virtually. Mindfulness exercises helped to center anxious students, art packets occupied creative hands, music assignments helped minds explore new sounds. Teachers held office hours on Zoom so that students could check in or just use that time to work collaboratively in the company of a familiar mentor. While some students raced off on scavenger hunts within their own homes on a challenge to identify terms in Spanish, others logged miles on atlasGO app, where, for every workout logged, a tree is planted on that student's behalf. We also connected by hosting virtual movie, game and trivia nights that brought students and their families together with faculty.

As of this printing, our campus is open and welcoming all students back to in-person classes. But for some, in-person classes present too much of a risk to their own health or the health of a family member, and so online and hybrid curriculum remain available and a part of the new normal at Community School. Incorporated into our daily routines are health screenings, social distancing, face masks and sanitizing protocols and yet, learning continues as it did before. Some participate from their kitchen tables and some learn while sitting on logs outside of classrooms, in the sensory garden or by the creek. Movement and mindfulness classes take place on yoga mats laid in the grass in the field, and indoor classrooms are utilized safely as needed. Our teachers, our front line workers, continue to engage and invent and foster a love of learning no matter where our students are.

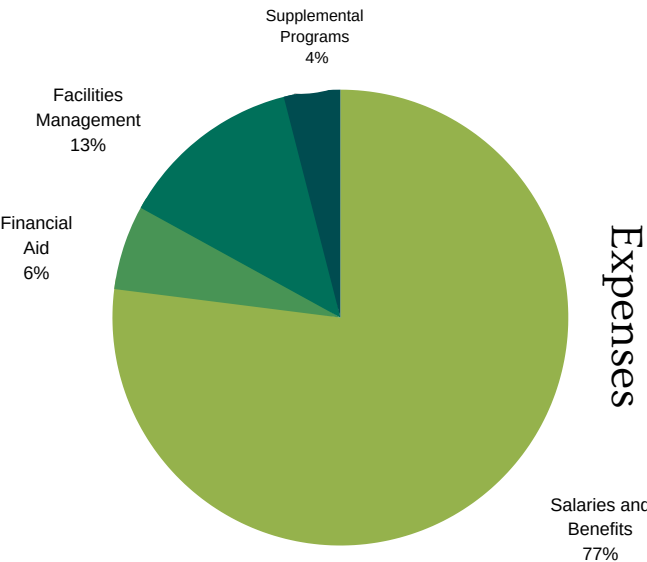
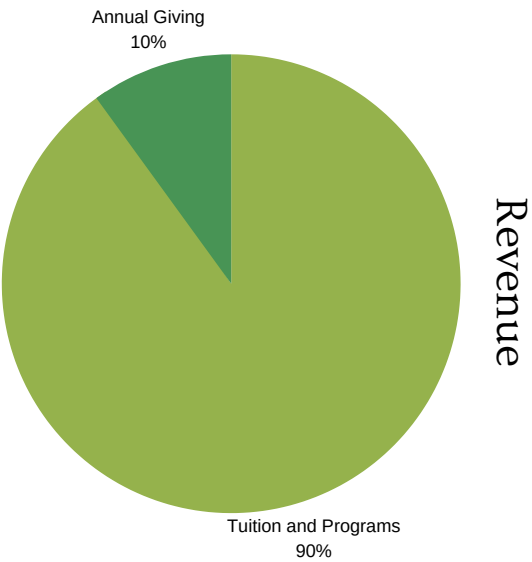


Fall Festival 2020



Community School's Annual Fund

Community School's Annual Fund is a tax-deductible opportunity for families, alumni and friends of the school to support the resources and programs that are essential to our focus on the whole child. Annually, profits from the Strawberry Festival combined with gifts to the Annual Fund, support nearly 10% of Community School's budget. A successful Strawberry Festival, underwritten by sponsors and staffed by volunteers, makes up over half of the money we are able to raise each year. Due to the cancellation of the 2020 Strawberry Festival, we face a substantial shortfall to our 2021 budget. Donations to Community School support supplemental programs for our students as well as professional development for our teachers. This year, our investments in technology upgrades and teacher training that make it possible to continue to offer an engaging curriculum while distance learning are especially significant. Please consider donating to Community School's Annual Fund to help us bridge this gap. **Give securely online today at Communityschool.net/Give.**



Community School's Strawberry Sprint Virtual 5K

Those familiar with virtual runs may know that a virtual 5K can be completed in any location, at any time, at any pace. Participants can walk, jog, run, use the treadmill, hit the road or even go for a hike. CS embraced the popularity of this virtual activity creating the Strawberry Sprint to be held in conjunction with the Strawberry Festival and intended to help celebrate our 40th year. While planned well before the pandemic, the event was timely and met with great enthusiasm, as people sought to find safe, outdoor activities during the spring.

A Reimagined Strawberry Festival

Our beloved festival quietly took place virtually this year, with families celebrating with their own shortcakes. The original shortcake recipe, shared by email and via the web, inspired a variety of takes on the celebration of the strawberry that would have enjoyed a 40-year anniversary in May. The future impact of the pandemic is uncertain and encouraging us to reimagine our tradition and largest fundraiser. Stay tuned for announcements, and save the date for the first weekend in May 2021!



From the Chair of the Board of Trustees

Cassie Hunt

When we look back on this year – going into our 50th year of Community School – we can do so with great pride for the incredible work undertaken by our teachers and staff, our students and parents and all members of our community. Together, this group has worked seamlessly to navigate new technology, adapt to a new learning environment, welcome new faces and to do it all with boundless enthusiasm and a strong commitment to each other. I cannot put into words how impressed I am with all that our teachers have done – both seen and unseen – to keep our children safe and healthy.

Students recently participated in their first conference of the year, to set goals. As parents, we ask our children ‘How can we help you accomplish this?’ As a board, we too have done our goal setting for the year, and we look forward to reporting on our progress as we:

- Conclude fundraising for the new building portion of the Next 50 Capital Campaign
- Identify fundraising opportunities to complement Strawberry Festival
- Address and improve faculty salaries
- Ensure a strong and diverse board membership

We hope that you, in reading these goals, will ask ‘How can we help you accomplish this?’ Community School is our village and it relies on all members to be its best. To get involved, please reach out to me at crhunt@wlu.edu.

The greatest gift that I can give my children is to be part of this community, and I am honored to serve this year as your board chair, to give back a bit of what CS has given to us. Thank you for your support of our efforts, and your commitment to Community School.

Cassie Hunt is the mother of a CS alumnus and current student. Prior to taking the helm as board chair, she was a member of the board of trustees, chairing The Next 50 Campaign. When not volunteering her time with Community School she works full-time as the Executive Director of Advancement Operations at Washington and Lee University. If you'd like to talk to her about how you can make an impact on Community School or The Next 50, please contact her by email at crhunt@wlu.edu.



Special Events

Due to social distancing, many of our special events are being reimaged this year. Please look for email and website updates with details about virtual and socially distanced events.

Community School's Strawberry Festival
April 30–May 1, 2021, Roanoke
Spring Arts Festival – TBD
Celebration
June 8, 2021

Board of Trustees

Board Chair

Cassie Hunt

Secretary & Hollins Representative

Ashley Browning

Finance

Rhonda Shannon

Long Range Planning

Josh Chapman

Executive Director

Linda Roth

Trustees

Whit Ellerman

Aaron Houchens

Jay O'Keeffe

Hiren Patel

Faculty Representatives

Katrina Hill

Katlyn Oldham

Trustee Emeritus

David Lloyd

The Next 50

Capital Campaign Update



The Next 50
Deepening our roots. Cultivating our future.



We are so pleased to share news of our progress on The Next Fifty: Deepening our Roots, Cultivating our Future. Since our announcement at last year's Thanksgiving Art Show, we have made tremendous progress, securing the two largest gifts ever made to Community School, along with generous commitments from dozens of families. We want to especially thank those who have stepped forward with commitments to build our future. When we open the doors of our new building, you will see familiar names of beloved teachers, founders and stalwart families whose service to Community School will be recognized with spaces named in their honor.

It is an exciting time for CS as we embark on our next half-century as an education leader in the Roanoke Valley. The model of experiential, hands-on education that has driven our success for the past 50 years, remains as relevant as ever as we continue to embrace outdoor learning and small classes.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can help, please email campaign chair, Cassie Hunt at crhunt@wlu.edu. You are the foundation for our Next 50 and we cannot do it without you!

Learn more about The Next 50 at CommunitySchool.net/thenext50

Alumni Brothers

Bob and Max Bursey

We caught up with Brother's Bob and Max Bursey as they reflected on their time as part of the CS Community.

Bob Bursey

Where are you now?

After some 20 years of living in New York, Leah and I relocated to Austin, Texas with our young children in tow this past winter. We both work at the University of Texas at Austin—I am the executive director of UT's performing arts center, and Leah is a professor in the School of Theater and Dance. Our son Jude is almost a year old, and our daughter Lana turned 4 this summer. I'm grateful to have closed the chapter of my New York life in a special way, receiving a 2019 Tony Award—the highest honor in American theater.

How did your time at CS influence your academic and professional pursuits?

In arts and cultural leadership, problem-solving is everything. I am fortunate that I get to work in the world of creative possibilities everyday, and know that my CS experiences and learning have a lot to do with that. CS kindled so many of the things that I love—being active outside, engaging with art, exploring language, participating in the world of ideas. My experiences at CS have had a vast influence on my interests and way of being in the world.

What would you like to share about your CS experience as a student?

CS is so much a part of our family, it's difficult to say where my experience as a student started and stopped. My childhood world revolved around the Boxwoods, on every level. All the hallmarks of the Community School experience are certainly embedded in my memory—from fruit break to seminar to strawberries. And our teachers...simply the best. I remember specific field trips, art projects, and book discussions like they happened yesterday, even the playground and classrooms of the old Pre-K building on the Hollins campus.

CS was a perfect place for me. As our daughter nears kindergarten and my mom retires from teaching this year, I've been thinking a lot about our family's indelible connections to the school. My greatest hope is to find somewhere like it here for my own children, though of course there is nowhere like it. I'm grateful for that time and take heart knowing that many more students will have their own lasting moments. Here's to 50 more years!



Bob Bursey (Seminar class of 1995) with wife, Leah, daughter, Lana and son, Jude



Max Bursey
Seminar Class of 1999

Max Bursey

For background, I attended Roanoke College from 2004-2008 and Virginia College of Medicine-Blacksburg from 2008-2012. I completed emergency medicine residency at Augusta University (Augusta, GA) in 2015. I was an Active Duty emergency physician in the Army from 2015-2019.

Upon completion of my military service obligation, I decided to return to Augusta University to develop an Emergency Medicine Critical Care Fellowship training program. The EM-CC fellowship is a new program, and I am the first person to pursue such training at AU. I'm also currently working on creating a novel critical care space within the ED to ensure that our sickest patients receive the most advanced critical care as early as possible. Both of these are major projects that will define the direction of my career.

The foundations for my current career path were laid in my youth while attending Community School. Community School instilled a lifelong love of learning that continues to motivate me to improve my knowledge, skill, and practice to provide the absolute best care for my patients. It taught me the confidence to walk my own path, as well as the ingenuity and work ethic required to do so. It taught me empathy, critical thinking, and conflict resolution, which are skills I rely on everyday to navigate the worlds of clinical medicine, hospital administration, and academics. I'm grateful to Community School for teaching me all these things, and so many more.

When I say "Community School" taught me these things however, what I really mean is that my teachers, mentors, and peers taught me these things - the community taught me. Mom was an incredible part of that community, and a tremendous influence on so many students over the years, myself included. I'm extremely proud of and grateful for her career at CS. It gave me all the right tools to successfully pursue my own ambitions today.

Honoring a CS Legend

For the past 33 years, Betsy Bursey has been a keystone for our school and a constant reminder of our values, mission and philosophy. Sheryl Vaden, who taught with Betsy for 10 years commented, "Every student, who was lucky enough to have Betsy as their teacher, enjoyed her love, patience and compassion. I can't imagine a more pleasant school day than being in Betsy's classroom." Not only was Betsy a wonderful teacher, but she was willing to assist many other teachers along the way. Our staff noted that Betsy was an inspiration, a voice of reason and love, and "a champion for teaching how to create bravely." Kim Castner, who formerly worked as a new teacher with her, shared, "Betsy welcomed me with open arms when I started at CS and quickly became my mentor, friend and colleague. Her ideas and imaginative projects have become part of my classrooms and my students in North Carolina have definitely benefitted...she always goes above and beyond to support everyone around her." As a community, we are grateful that she shared her many gifts with us and wish her many happy years of retirement continuing to light the way.

