

COMMUNITY NEWS

FALL 2021

TO THE STARS

Community School
2021-2022



COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Grounding Ourselves in the Big Woods

HOW ONE TEACHER USED ONE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL'S
FAVORITE SPACES TO CONNECT A CLASSROOM



Like many of our teachers, Cynthia Stinnette noticed a new form of restlessness and anxiety in some of her middle elementary students last fall. Too much screen time and too little movement and socializing had created an atmosphere of imbalance that made it hard for her classroom to focus and settle into the rhythm of the school year. She looked to the Big Woods for answers.

Cynthia began by sharing and discussing a book about nature trails with her class. How and why do we take care of trails? What is the purpose of a trail? What is our place on a trail as it relates to the environment, caretaking and the consideration of animals and other people? Next, she had them experience a trail in the wooded area behind the elementary wing fondly known as the Big Woods. This is where her students fell in love.

What began as a unit on trails soon took on the routine of using the Big Woods as a classroom and a place to find grounding and solace. It was a place to embrace Community School's philosophy of The Big One: treat yourself, others and your environment with care. It was a place to run, balance and climb. It was a place to meditate, create and observe.

Cynthia's Big Woods activities always consisted of a morning walk on an existing trail, and eventually they created a trail of their own. These walks not only offered the movement needed to gain focus for the day, but also opportunities to apply concepts that they were working on as a class. There was a social and emotional

From the Chair of the Board of Trustees

CASSIE HUNT

It feels like just yesterday that we gathered for a Celebration of all that had been accomplished during an unpredictable year. We rejoiced in having remained fully in-person, in holding a unique Strawberry Festival, in providing our students with the engagement and support they needed to thrive during what was a very challenging time. It's hard to believe that we find ourselves so quickly back in the swing of a new year, one that looks resoundingly normal! We eagerly welcomed the return of Fall Festival camp-outs, in-person conferences and field trips. We delight in seeing parents back on campus, holding events like Bilingual Story Hour and 'Coffee by the Creek,' and, most importantly, seeing our children fully embracing the life of a Community School student.

The uncertainty of the past 18 months unfortunately caused us to pivot our attention away from the Board's top priority: the funding and construction of the new middle school and administrative building. Building upon our stability, and the strong and generous start to the campaign, we can now turn back to securing the gifts that will allow us to begin construction as soon as resources are available. We know that the Community School family will meet this urgent need as we have met all other challenges and opportunities before us. Stay tuned for more information coming to your mailbox on our **Next 50** building campaign, or please reach out to me (crhunt@wlu.edu or 540.817.0936) for a sneak preview and to find out how you can leave your mark in our new space.

On behalf of the Board, I thank you for all you do for our community. It is an honor to serve as your Chair.



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 Strategic Analysis 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.

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component as they watched out for others on the trail. Students worked on coordination skills as they kept an eye out for roots, read the terrain and made strategies for overcoming small obstacles. They collaborated when creating a map of the woods and even used ivy to handcraft crowns, bracelets and necklaces. The students would often work and read on the edge of the woods and then spend the remainder of their time at play among the trees.

Cynthia describes their time in the Big Woods as a secret getaway for her class.

It became a constant as the link between the time outside and a readiness to learn became evident, and the benefits of embracing The Big One once again anchored a group of students in need.



Arts Festival Back on Campus

While we missed the traditional grandeur of the Hollins University Theatre, it was exciting to see the Spring Arts Festival back on the CS campus. Regardless of its location, the Arts Festival is always about process, and our students ages 3 through middle school did not disappoint. Enrichment teachers Kim Mucha and Gina Kohler wonderfully transformed our outdoor stage into a performance area for every level. Thanks to the efforts of art teacher Karen Childers, visual arts were on display in the Activity Room, showcasing months of inspired work by students of all ages. Bravo to our young performing and visual artists and their moving displays of collaboration, creation and expression.



ALUMNI UPDATE

Tony Ziegler and Zach Tate

by Josh Chapman

I had the pleasure of teaching both Tony Ziegler and Zach Tate at CS Middle School when I was beginning my career. Both went on to attend Community High School, where I taught them again. They were funny, thoughtful and creative as children, and they remain so as they grow balder and more bearded.

Tony was instrumental in helping start CHS's film program, making a feature-length adaptation of Valentin Rasputin's *French Lessons* while he was still an underclassman. Zach became a remarkable editor almost immediately upon joining the high school. He also was one of the creative masterminds behind a sword fight filmed on the downtown parking deck that led to an unfortunate misunderstanding with Roanoke's finest.

They have continued this work in the years since, on projects ranging from stock car reality shows to Spike Lee's *Da 5 Bloods*. Phineas Chapman (CS seminar class of 2014) and I had the pleasure of dropping in on them this summer in Pawhuska, OK. They were busy recreating small-town life in the Osage Nation from a century ago for Martin Scorsese's latest film *Killers of the Flower Moon*. The brush with celebrity is exciting, but I was more impressed by the depth and precision of their work. They had replaced awnings on storefronts with period-appropriate cotton; they had manufactured utility poles with antique glass insulators borrowed from a collector; they had built livery stables and pool halls that looked real even when you stood next to them.

In other words, the education that they had received from an early age has prepared them well for their work. They are creative problem-solvers and they work collaboratively as team members. It's not enough to say that they pay attention to detail, though of course they do; it's also their job to find the details they need to reveal, a process requiring both a rich sense of design and a capacity for deep research. But they're also deeply curious beyond what's required for their work, and it was a great pleasure to hear all the ancillary things they've learned travelling for these projects.

Calling All Alumni!

We want to hear from you.

Drop us a line and tell us
how you're doing. MeganI@CommunitySchool.net.



Tony Ziegler (left) and Phineas Chapman (right)



Zach Tate (left) and Tony Ziegler (right)

Josh Chapman (CS class of '83) is the Academic Director at Community High School in Roanoke. He is a graduate of Yale University, where he earned his B.A. in Anthropology and holds graduate degrees in Social Science and Creative Writing from Hollins University. Josh's sons Phineas (CS class of '14) and Jupiter (upcoming CS class of 2022) also attended Community School, as did his siblings Sara, Maya, Seth and Brittany. His mother, Cherry Chapman, taught at Community for many years.

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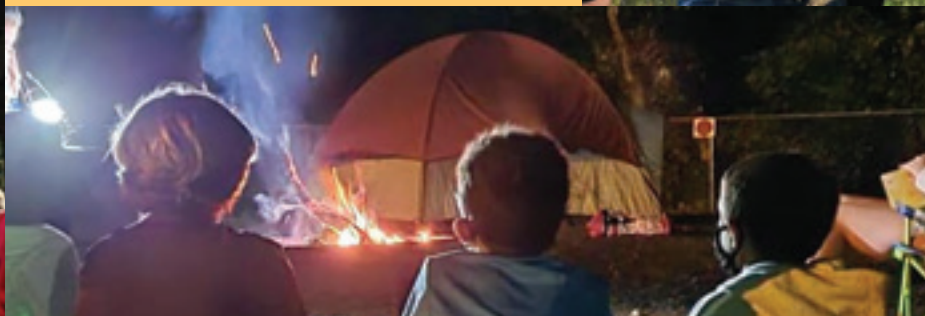
Years of putting the child
at the center of the
learning process



Community School 1971

158

Students will benefit from
your generosity this
academic year



Thousands

Of hours exploring, learning and
connecting outdoors

1:3

Students benefit from
some financial support



10%

Of our yearly budget
depends on Annual
Appeal Giving

LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP AND MODEL UN

In June of this year, a group of CS alumni and current high school students hosted their fourth annual Community Model UN Training Conference (ComMUNC IV).



Every year, this camp/conference requires hours of dedicated and focused attention. This year was no different, but it held more meaning because four members of the Secretariat – those who lead and mentor the conference – were graduating and this was their last camp. It's the "Circle Game," right? The seasons, they go round and round. Elementary students become middle schoolers, middle schoolers become high schoolers, high schoolers graduate and move on.

These four members of the Secretariat were the founding members of what has become a Community School staple. They were among the group of seventh graders (third years) who pioneered the only middle school Model UN program in the Roanoke Valley over five years ago. In 2016-2017, these students took a leap of faith by learning all they could about Model UN before attending their first, and very eye-opening, conference at the College of William and Mary (WMIDMUN). It was a steep learning curve, and they returned home committed to study and hone their skills as delegates. Each year since that initial conference, CS has attended WMIDMUN with the knowledge and mentorship gained by older students, and it now represents a formidable group of informed and confident students who are able to participate in debate, deliver opening speeches and build consensus during committee meetings.

The growth and success of Community School's Model UN program are in large part due to its peer-led and



hosted conference that takes place as a camp on the CS campus. The conference is structured based on the experiences of older delegates who craft the agenda with the goal of also training rising delegates to lead future conferences. Three years after the first CS Model UN Conference, a majority of the Secretariat was made up of delegates who attended the very first year of camp. Two of the four original members served as the first two Secretaries-General, leading their team through every step of camp preparation and execution. In 2020, the new Secretary-General was a delegate who learned the ropes from one of the original members. And now, the majority of the Secretariat is made up of delegates who attended the camp, some since its first year. The cycle of mentorship and leadership that is so much a part of the Community School culture continues to fuel this conference and make our Model UN program a valuable part of our middle school experience.

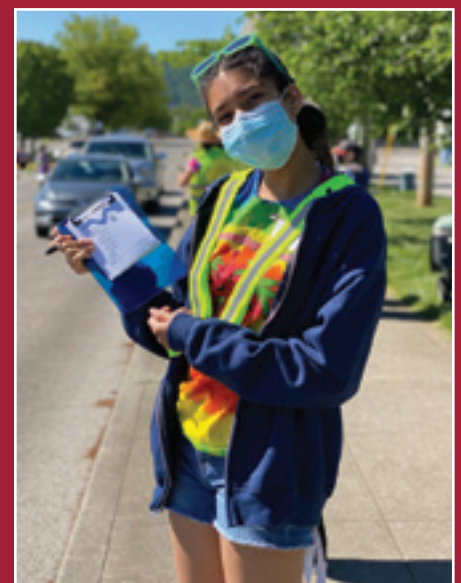
In his book *If You Plant a Seed*, author and illustrator Kadir Nelson shares how little seeds can grow into the sweetest fruits if they are nurtured. ComMUN Conference has now had four successful years, thanks to the seeds planted by a group of Community School middle school students over five years ago.

Katrina Hill leads the Model UN program at Community School. She also teaches Humanities and leads the Local Hero Award Program. This is her twentieth year teaching at Community School.



Strawberry Festival – A Reimagined Success

Reimagined as a drive-through experience, the 41st Annual Strawberry Festival served up thousands of shortcakes and strawberry desserts to the Roanoke Valley. The CS community did what it does best. It critically analyzed, problem-solved, collaborated, innovated, and trusted that their efforts would be rewarded. When the gates opened on Friday, we found that the people of Roanoke welcomed a return to normalcy and homemade shortcakes! We appreciate our parents, students, grandparents, staff, alumni, and friends of the school for their participation. It was their expertise, stamina, generosity and most of all their Community School spirit that made this a success. We are excited to be returning to Elmwood Park in 2022 and encourage you to make plans now to join in the fun as a volunteer. Look for more information in the spring about Alumni shifts.



LOCAL HERO AWARDS: FOOD INSECURITY AND SERVICE

While pandemic restrictions made it challenging to perform service projects last year, students still found ways to connect and develop themselves as local and global citizens. As part of the Local Hero Award Friday Group, middle school students studied food insecurity. They organized and created artwork for an Empty Bowls Fundraiser to support the Roanoke chapter of Casa Latina, a non-profit social service agency dedicated to supporting the Latino community. In addition, they interviewed teachers and created a documentary featuring descriptions of service projects completed by students of all ages over the past several years.



SPECIAL EVENTS



Thanksgiving Art Show

NOVEMBER 22-23
Community School
Activity Room



42nd Annual Strawberry Festival

MAY 6-7, 2022
Elmwood Park, Roanoke



Spring Arts Festival

MAY 20, 2022
Hollins Theatre and
Taylor Gym



Celebration

JUNE 8, 2022
Hollins University
Chapel