Beyond the

Birches

AC STORIES
Part of the solution here; then everywhere
Grandparents & Special Friends Day

Thank you to all our grandparents and special friends who braved the snow on November 22nd, 2016 to join us for one of our favorite days of the year!
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photo: Mick Gee
It’s a long story.

We have continued our new tradition of having a faculty member speak at Holiday Breakfast, and this year we were honored to have veteran faculty member Randy Northrup share his wisdom and inspiration. He graciously allowed us to share excerpts of his remarks here—including a story he decided to omit in order to keep the program “not too long” for everyone!
Best wishes to all of you for love, joy, and peace. Speaking to you today is a special opportunity for me, a chance to celebrate with all of you at Holiday Breakfast. This wonderful tradition has been dear to my heart for many years. I am grateful to have the privilege of working at this wonderful school, an institution where, because of our independence, my judgment has been trusted for over thirty years to design and implement an educational program for my students.

And, today, I have been trusted to share some thoughts with you. I hope this trust was not misplaced.

I must begin by saying that I am a bit nervous. I am not used to speaking to a crowd of “big people.” Those who listen to me are generally shorter and younger. So, with your indulgence, I will feel more comfortable addressing the kids. But you should feel free to listen in. Hi, Lower School Students! Kindergarteners, you did a great job! You really made so many of us happy with your song. Can you believe my own kids sang that same song at Holiday Breakfast, and they’re all grown up now? Our oldest, Kaitlin, arrived late last night from California and I know she remembers standing on the bench and the click, click, click. And our son Zachary is watching the live stream right now in Syracuse with his wife and our new little twin grandsons! When we were there the other day, I looked at his Christmas tree and saw a red and green and sparkly bow tie clipped on a branch way up high. It was just like the ones you are wearing. He has kept it all these years.

You are all part of a long line of students who have gathered at Holiday Breakfast over the years to celebrate - to celebrate each other, to celebrate the things we have in common, and even to celebrate our differences, too. You are part of the history, the STORY of our school.

And speaking of stories, soon there will be another favorite part of the Holiday Breakfast program. The lifers will come up and share memories of their time here at AC. Just think, some years from now you may be up here. What stories do you think you will tell?

This is the time of year for stories. All across the Northern Hemisphere as the chill of winter sets in, as the sun seems to be dying, its weak rays do not warm us, and it is gone so soon in the afternoon. Darkness comes early, not like in the summer when we can play outside past bedtime. In this dark chill, for hundreds—even thousands—of years, families have pulled close together. It seems that many different people from many different lands with many different cultures and religions have used this time to gather and share stories with one another. These are the stories of their people, the stories of their families. There are stories that are remembered and passed on, and there are stories that are told just for fun.

Stories are very important.

One of the best parts of being a teacher is listening to your stories. You share with us the things that are important to you, and, as we set the stage to help you explore and discover and learn, we get to help you create your own unique story: the story of YOU. We get a chance to help you learn how to organize your ideas and to develop your skill at telling the world who you are.

Do your parents tell you stories? Maybe there are special storybooks that you like them to share. My fifth graders have just finished reading a book in which one of the characters liked to tell stories. Actually, she liked to tell scary stories, and all of the kids in the neighborhood loved to be scared. I asked my students if they knew anybody who was good at telling stories, and they all had at least one good answer. I will say that parents and grandparents were most often mentioned. I’ve been around long enough to know that kids love to hear stories about when their parents did naughty things when they were little. Right?

Young children like you seem to love to hear their parents’ stories, and parents love to hear their children’s stories. You see, when you were very little, your parents loved to hear everything you had to say. They thought you were geniuses and the funniest and most creative children who ever lived (either that or they were patient in listening as parents are supposed to be). When you were very young, your stories could go on and on and on and on, but they listened. They even listened to your jokes. (continues)
Yes, when you found out what a joke was, you created some real doozies. I hate to tell you, but your jokes were not that funny and usually didn’t make sense, but the grownups in your life listened and laughed. My grandson Max just arrived from California, and about a year ago when he was just four, he discovered knock-knock jokes. Don’t laugh; you did the same thing. “Knock knock.” “Who’s there?” “Chicken.” “Chicken who?” “Chicken in the road!” And he giggled hysterically. Do you think I liked to listen to his jokes? You bet I did.

When people really listen to you, and when they hear your story, it feels good. I think it would be a good thing for you to do the same for others, and not just now when you are young. When you are older, remember the good feeling you felt when your parents laughed at your jokes and listened to your stories, and make sure you do the same.

Even as our world moves faster, even as our world seems to grow smaller because we can communicate so quickly and easily, and maybe because of these things, the ability to tell our stories and to listen effectively to the stories of others is very important.

Some of you know how much I love to tell stories, and this one also has another of my favorite topics: art. Most importantly, this story from Thailand is about an important theme today: Peace.

Once upon a time, a great king offered a prize to the artist who could paint the most perfect image of peace. Many artists sent their work to the grand palace. The king narrowed down the choices to his two favorites. The first was a perfect picture of a soft spring day beside a lake. The lake was calm and glassy. Soft white clouds floated on a gentle breeze, and warm sunlight cast faint shadows from the trees.

The second painting was quite different. Beautiful but rugged mountains stood close by, and dark clouds behind them hinted that a storm might be brewing. A mighty stream of water ran down the mountainside in angry rapids and powerful waterfalls. When the king looked very closely at this painting, however, he saw a small bush growing next to the waterfall. In the branches of the bush there was a bird’s nest, and on the nest was a mother bird gently watching over her sleeping babies. The king’s people were surprised when this was the painting he chose, but he explained his choice. “Peace does not really mean being in a place with no noise, trouble, or challenges. Peace means to be in the middle of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace.”

While we live in the middle of this challenging world, peace can be at the center of our hearts. Even when we are challenged, maybe this peace can spread. We can’t contribute to peace on Earth if we don’t have peace inside us.

So, I guess stories can teach us. Stories can entertain us. Stories give us a chance to tell who we are. Friends, let’s continue to listen now to the stories told to us in music and by seniors who are lifers. Then go home and listen to stories carefully. And remember to tell your own story with power, truth, and imagination.

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**So, I guess stories can teach us. Stories can entertain us. Stories give us a chance to tell who we are.**

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**Holiday Breakfast 2016** Holiday Breakfast continues to be a beloved tradition at Allendale Columbia School. On the final day of school in 2016, we gathered together to celebrate our diverse community, listen to stories, and reflect on the generational strength of the long-standing impact AC has on students and families.
STORIES ABOUT A STORYTELLER
ALUMS RECALL A UNIQUE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Jay Theuer ’97
Allowing students to create their own learning opportunities.

“Every year, Mr. Northrup made these incredible stars out of paper. I was fascinated how a two-dimensional piece of paper could be transformed into an incredible three dimensional object, and I couldn’t wait to be a fourth grader to make them in his class. Mr. Northrup’s creative approach to teaching and learning was a talent. He showed us how to use spatial reasoning and geometry through something that someone else might categorize as ‘arts and crafts.’ Through all of his projects, he used the process of self discovery and experiential learning to allow students to create their own learning opportunities.”

On the topic of the English language.

“I was a student in Mr. Northrup’s fourth grade classroom. One thing that I still remember to this day was Mr. Northrup’s insistence around using English language properly. When someone asked, ‘Can I go to the bathroom?’ he would often say, ‘I don’t know, can you?’ I have taken this with me to this day; I am always encouraging my employees to ask the question they mean to ask and to articulate their intention. He knew that during these formative years, as a young person, you just wanted and needed to be heard—and he listened.”

Molly (Naparsteck) Lackey ’03
For every single student, every single year.

“Mr. Northrup spent time creating a unique and very beautiful name tag for every single student in his class, and on the first day of school, I was excited to see my name tag taped to my desk! I’m not sure if this is something he does every year, but I remember it making me feel special that year. I was sad on the last day of school when we had to take them off and mine accidentally tore. I wanted to keep it!”

A teacher who can make learning fun.

“Over 20 years later, I still remember Mr. Northrup being the most connected with his students out of all my teachers. He had a way of commanding students’ attention while still being fun. I think I learned more in his classes because I was genuinely excited to be in his class every day. A teacher who can make learning fun is truly a gift to any student.”

Jennifer Westerfeld ’96
Fourth grade changed my life.

“Fourth grade completely, irrevocably, changed the course of my life, because it was in fourth grade that I learned about the power of storytelling and the way stories let us experience entirely new worlds. I may have learned to read in earlier grades, but it was Mr. Northrup who made me a reader.

“I have a lot of vivid memories from Mr. Northrup’s classroom: tactile memories, like the time we churned our own butter to learn about daily life in Colonial America; visual memories, like the Roman bust topped with a neon clown wig; taste memories, like the cookies in the shape of New York State that we decorated (and ate) in order to learn local geography. But what I remember most of all is the sound of Mr. Northrup’s voice as he read to us, every day of the school year.

“It’s been almost thirty years since I sat cross-legged on the floor in that fourth-grade classroom and listened to Mr. Northrup bring those books to life. I’m a historian now, and a writer, with students of my own. I often think about those fourth-grade lessons. And I think about Mr. Northrup, the man of a thousand voices, enormous heart, and boundless creativity, who can take a sheet of construction paper and turn it into a crown, a cookie and turn it into a map, a group of fidgety eight-year-olds and turn them into world explorers.”
AC Now Opportunity Scholars are making an impact

The statistics are alarming for all of us. AC is less than five miles away from the heart of our city, which is ranked first in childhood and extreme poverty when compared to similar-sized cities around the nation. Only 14% of Rochester children who enter kindergarten graduate from high school. For curious, determined children, the odds are stacked against success.

“We are committed to being part of the solution and the larger community effort to address the educational needs of our region,” explained Head of School Mick Gee. “Thanks in part to early support from the Gleason Family Foundation, AC has a long tradition of offering generous financial aid, and we have compelling stories to share about the impact. As we build on a solid track record of excellent outcomes, we know we have a model and a community that can help lead the change, if we work together.”

AC Now Scholarships honor and support all new and returning students on financial aid at Allendale Columbia School. Our AC Now Opportunity Scholarships honor and support new and returning AC students who live at or below the poverty level who demonstrate a remarkable determination and curiosity. As we begin to share inspiring stories about AC Now Scholars who are leaders, refugees, writers, explorers, researchers, trailblazers, entrepreneurs, and more, we hope you will share your story and plan to join us for our first AC Now Scholar Breakfast on May 18th, 2017 to learn more.

We are part of the solution, and you can be, too.

If you are interested in sharing your story, joining us on May 18th, or supporting AC Now Opportunity Scholarships, please contact Karyn Vella at 585.641.5313 or kvella@allendalecolumbia.org.
A young Somali girl, born and raised for five years in refugee camps in Kenya, moves with her family to Honeoye Falls, N.Y.; meets a neighbor who becomes a mentor, friend, and mother; experiences a life-changing educational opportunity at Allendale Columbia School; and graduates in 2016 as a prestigious QuestBridge Scholar.

Three ingredients: 1. an eager child connected to her family and culture; 2. a mentor and advocate; 3. a mission-driven school that invested in her and funded her education.

I met Mukuundo when she was in first grade in Honeoye Falls; I extended myself to the family in a neighborly way and as a possible English language teacher. I noticed immediately that Mukuundo learned to read at an early age while her older siblings struggled. I also noticed that she was excelling by fourth grade. When I would take her to the library, we could hardly carry all of the books home. I contacted Allendale Columbia and was met with professionals who had the compassionate understanding of the two worlds this child was living in: growing up in a household completely dedicated to East African culture and striving to become an American school girl.

With the generous scholarships and grants made available to Mukuundo from Allendale Columbia, she was able to bravely start in fifth grade and attend through graduation at a very low cost. She is a young lady who can be very reserved, but teachers reported that her smiles were omnipresent, her laughter contagious, and her inquiry in class uninhibited. I so wished to be a fly on the wall in her classes. One cannot say enough about the supportive faculty at Allendale Columbia. Mukuundo knew that she was invited to spend extra time during the day to work on concepts that were more challenging. She used this opportunity without pause. I remember thinking that this was like Plato’s theories on education: meeting with the student on a mentor basis, knowing the student well, and asking and answering questions for the student. Education cannot be more pure than that!

At Allendale Columbia, Mukuundo was treated as any other student. At other schools, she may have been made to feel different or even been singled out. This was not the case at AC. The faculty and staff know the value of cultural and economic diversity in their school, and they are committed to offering a superb education to all.

In the early years, it was common for Mukuundo to spend an overnight with my family about once a week so that I could help her process her experiences. Every year, I reminded her that it was her choice to attend AC or not; I never wanted her to feel pushed. She always chose AC!

After launching our own three young men into college, my husband and I realized that the college journey for Mukuundo would likely be on our shoulders. However, it was not a burden. Kristin Merriman, AC’s College Advisor; introduced Mukuundo and me to the QuestBridge Scholarship program, and her ongoing guidance was invaluable. Mukuundo had a beautiful application package assembled for her college process—a tribute to her hard work and Kristin’s guidance—and I enjoyed doing college tours with Mukuundo.

She is now a prestigious QuestBridge Scholar at Wellesley College and loving it.

I will never forget the moment in fifth grade when she chose to study and write a short biography on Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. I’m not sure she knew it at the time, but quite fittingly, Madeleine Albright was responsible for bringing 26,000 stranded Somali Bantu refugees to the United States, including Mukuundo’s family. Madeleine Albright, a refugee from Czechoslovakia, is also a graduate of Wellesley College.

From her AC experience, Mukuundo writes exceptionally well, and she loves biology. Her future is unknown to us, yet as we watch her with curiosity, we thank Allendale Columbia for giving her an enormously important education.

I always wondered if Mukuundo would ever return to Africa, and just this past January, just after I wrote this piece, she and twelve other Wellesley students traveled with their Swahili teacher to Tanzania and Kenya for three weeks on a cultural and language immersion trip. Allendale Columbia undoubtedly prepared a bilingual, bicultural, and bicognitive child in a comfortable, caring, and exceptional academic environment for college and life in a complex, unscripted world.

The AC Now Opportunity Scholarship grants would make Mukuundo’s life-changing opportunity available to others. I can’t think of a better gift that looks toward a brighter future.
“What do you want, and how will you get there?”

Reflections from Mallory Mintz ’14, AC Now Opportunity Scholar, Carleton College ’18

**How has your Allendale Columbia experience impacted you?**

Combined with so many other elements, my time at AC was like a springboard; it prepared me to pursue experiences that I otherwise wouldn’t have been nearly so well-equipped to handle.
My time at AC started in Middle School. I was gawky, fairly nerdy, and frankly terrified of my peers and the new setting that I found myself in. Looking back, I realize that the impression that I had of the world probably wasn't so different from that of my peers, but I was so scared of what was in front of me. I remember the night before my first day, I cried my eyes out in bed, completely broken down by my phobias, both realized and imagined, about how school at AC would change my day-to-day life. I was scared of trading familiar things—friends, academics that I knew I could handle, and everything familiar about my previous school environment—for something terrifyingly new. I don’t remember any particular way of coping with these feelings, just the dread coming up on me.

First here, then … subarctic fieldwork! In a more general way, first here, then to the front lines of whatever every impassioned AC student sets his/her mind to.

With support on campus and off campus, I adjusted well enough to love AC. By the time that I had graduated from Middle School, I felt that I needed to move on from AC. I imagined that I needed to broaden my horizons beyond the small class size, which had dwindled into the 20s at that point. I remember I was no longer filled with dread at the thought of starting Upper School elsewhere. I could attribute my lack of real anticipatory dread to simple teenage brass, but I think the difference lies more with the growing up that I did in my three years at AC; I learned to be self-reliant and confident in my ability to handle my environment, both in personal affairs and in academics. After two years away from Allendale Columbia, I had changed my tune once again. I returned to AC in my junior year, thrilled to be returning to the setting and peers that had influenced the person that I was and would foster further development.

AC took me back with open arms; I was welcomed back like I had never left, especially by the staff. Where my previous school had been an exercise in learning about what I wouldn’t tolerate, AC was a choice: what do you want, and how will you get there? AC provided the resources and context for students to learn about independence, especially in the context of academics. Technical skills like critical reading and writing translated into experiences that shaped my opinions and informed my thoughts. Discussions in the classroom and beyond became fodder for further intellectual pursuits, and I’m willing to attribute my current passion for studying climate-related science fields as a direct result of these conversations.

Sitting in a hotel room in Minneapolis the night before I moved in to my dorm at Carleton College (and the night before my eighteenth birthday), I realized AC was, perhaps, behind a few values instilled in me even before middle school, the single most important influence on my life. First and foremost, AC provided the environment that allowed me to test my abilities and master skills that would prove essential to my academics, but more, it fostered my development as a person. I wouldn’t have traded the opportunity to grow up in the AC community for anything.

What opportunities did you have at AC that you didn’t have in your previous school?

AC’s greatest strength is its ability to focus on individual students. My experience was filled with teachers who challenged me with not only history and math, but self-awareness and responsibility to both my community and myself. I learned about resilience and determination in biology and chemistry. U.S. History wasn’t just a lesson in the founding of the country, but taught flexibility and mental dexterity. Art wasn’t about the prize-winning work, but rather the tools of self-expression and communication.

Was there a particular experience, teacher, or course that changed your way of thinking while you were at AC?

I think the level of community engagement at AC is fantastic and really changed my view on how to bring about the changes that I want to see in my community. Events like community service day, the Empty Bowls Project, and Cabaret bring the school together for causes that are important to all of us—we can all find some way of participating. Teaching that life lesson of community engagement early on is amazingly helpful and something that my peers and I build on in college in that same tradition. Especially in this climate, and as my generation becomes more politically aware and active, this sort of community engagement allows us to be effective leaders in bringing about the changes and awareness that are so important to us.

Did any of your opportunities at AC inspire you to think about what you want to do after college?

I’ve always been passionate about the natural spaces that surround us, but AC provided the context for that appreciation in an academic setting and also in our community. Passionate teachers taught their subjects expertly, and discussion continued from the classroom into the dining hall and hallways and followed me home to the dinner table. In the AC community, we demonstrated our willingness to give back to make the green spaces around us better, through both on and off campus initiatives. I joined the field of climate science research in the hopes of making a difference, and my AC education had a huge role in making me believe that my contributions matter—that a community taken as a whole is the most significant driver of change. I want to be part of one of these communities assembled to combat global climate change from a scientific standpoint.
As my high school years are coming to a close, I can’t help but look back to when I first visited Allendale Columbia in 2013. While looking at new schools, most students consider whether or not they will fit in or if the classes are taught in a manner that suits them. Granted, while these were big factors in my decision to attend Allendale Columbia, I was thinking to myself, “OK, the hallways are carpeted. Most ceilings are tiled. The architecture has a lot of open spaces and the atmosphere was quiet and orderly. Oh, look, a visual fire alarm! Good. I won’t die.” You may be wondering why I had such weird criteria for looking at schools, but I was looking for a “deaf-friendly” place, and, unbeknownst to Allendale Columbia at the time, the campus is really a “deaf-friendly” place. The carpeted floors and tiled ceilings help reduce noises such as the ever-so-annoying click-clack sound of high heels on a hard surface echoing into the classroom. Open spaces allow for a clear view of my interpreter; and a quiet and orderly atmosphere means that distracting noises can be kept at bay.

According to the last recorded census, 19% of the American population, or 56.7 million people, have some form of disability, and every day these people observe instances in their lives that hinder them from completely integrating with the greater population. Upon coming to AC as a hard of hearing teenager, I knew that statistics were stacked against my favor, but it was a challenge I was willing to face.

My first hurdle took place Freshman year when I joined the swim team. The combination of being without an interpreter at the time and being unable to wear my hearing aids or my glasses (which helps me read lips) made swimming a hassle. One time, I misheard some instructions and performed a drill incorrectly. After I finished my drill, my coaches called me over to reprimand me. After I explained that I couldn’t hear the instructions, I was reprimanded again, and, with that, I vowed to devote some of my time at Allendale Columbia to making it a more accessible place for all.

Sophomore year, I spent time during what was previously called Collab Block, forming a proposal for the school to initiate several projects. My efforts put the need for accessibility—including the need for ramps and options for the many stairs on campus—on the table as an important topic. The day I saw construction being started on a lift in the Dining Commons, I jumped and screamed out of complete joy. I couldn’t help but beam with pride in my school for taking initiative!

Another great point of pride I will carry with me from my high school experience at AC is participating in the musical. In my debut in The Addams Family, our theatre director sought out my signing abilities and used it to enhance a rather “ghoulish” show. Since then, I have found my new love for theatre, and we have incorporated sign language in every musical since. However, nothing could compare to our most recent November 2016 production of Cinderella, where the entire cast literally adopted a language that I call my own and signed numerous numbers in the show. Our Cinderella was an experience I will forever take with me wherever I go. I am so proud of and grateful that AC is a community willing to show how accessible theatre can be and how accessible a new approach to education can be for all students.

I am a firm believer in making an impact, a core value that AC has instilled in me in these past four years. For me, making a positive impact would mean that, one day in the future, a child would face one less obstacle in the pursuit of higher learning as a result of me breaking down barriers pertaining to disability; then all my trials and tribulations would have been worth it. That is why “ACcessibility,” as I call it, is so important to me.
As I walk around the building on an almost daily basis, it is exciting to watch Lower School students at Allendale Columbia working individually or in small groups at a level of engagement that reflects purpose and enthusiasm. It is also very apparent to me that our classroom teachers have fully invested in Project-Based Learning (PBL).

Project-Based Learning is an educational model that gives students a purpose for learning. The Driving Question creates the first path to a destination or outcome. The journey that begins with The Driving Question can often take on pauses, detours, and winding roads that provide foundational skills that students need to learn in order to arrive at the final destination.

Parents occasionally ask how and when foundational skills are taught when a curriculum is designed around PBL, and this is where relevance sparks incredible curiosity. Some foundational skills are planned in advance and evaluated for the level of mastery that students need to successfully complete the PBL. For example, consider the driving question, “How does the average temperature of this past September in Rochester compare to the five previous Septembers?” Direct foundational instruction may be planned in advance around research skills, finding averages, rounding, designing graphs, etc., so that students can effectively respond to the driving question.

The need to teach some foundational skills can also emerge as PBL takes a direction that may not have been originally considered. An example of this might be the need to teach the parts of a business letter to a small group of students who want to effectively communicate with the CEO of a company.

At AC, we recognize that it should never be assumed that every child in the class needs the same level of instruction of a foundational skill. In Lower School, differentiation is critically important because it is the key to allowing each child to move forward or go more in-depth with a skill; thus, differentiation is, by its nature, varied when done well.

While some schools are heavily restricted by Common Core standards and scheduling, in Lower School at AC, all instruction can be done in PBL time whether students are working independently on projects or learning a foundational skill that will successfully propel them forward. It is clear that students retain information better once they apply it, and the application of a foundational skill becomes real when it is put into practice within the context of PBL.

As a faculty, we are modeling collaborative teaching and learning by creating a resource list of students, faculty and staff, parents, and community members who can act as experts for our students. One teacher alone cannot create a PBL environment that provides fluidity of movement, flexibility of goals, and a definitive solution to every unforeseen obstacle. It takes collaboration and communication between many people to make this model of education work most effectively. It takes an acceptance that the PBL model is not a pretty little package that we impose on our students; instead, it’s a dynamic, messy process that engages children in their own learning and equips them with skills to thrive in the unscripted world ahead of them.
I loved volunteering in Allendale Columbia’s kindergarten classroom, but I knew there was a lot of need in the city schools too; I was looking for a way to get involved with them. I stumbled across the organization Give Back, Give Books, which collects books to build school libraries or to give to city school students to take home. I reached out to them about collecting books to donate and was put in contact with a kindergarten teacher at School #25 to see what kinds of books her students wanted and needed. The conversation evolved to her inviting us to read the books with her students, and with the help of AC faculty member Diane Broberg and Allendale Columbia’s leadership, our first visit to the kindergarten classroom at School #25 became a reality.

The first time we visited, we read books with the kindergarteners and brought short readers for them to take home. As this relationship evolved and our visits expanded to include projects like arts and crafts, we realized we could do more for these kids. We decided to donate the coats we had been annually collecting to students at this school. Following that, we started our first “Can the Principal” drive to donate kid-friendly food boxes to families before the summer, since over 90% of School #25 students qualify and rely on free and reduced price school meals. The partnership has now expanded beyond what I could have imagined after our first trip, and I love hearing about it whenever I visit AC!

Today, AC students visit School #25 several times a year to do activities with them, read with them, and share coats and food collected annually by current students in the Community Service Club.
Gee leads school to expand, improve

Enrollment at Allendale Columbia has risen some 26 percent since 2012

By LORI GABLE

Michael Gee took the helm at Allendale Columbia School in July 2012, and since then enrollment is up 26 percent, the annual fund has more than doubled and the campus has expanded with the opening of a $250,000 Design and Innovation Lab.

As the academic year begins, Gee is looking forward to more accomplishments for the 126-year-old school, which he prefers to describe as independent rather than private.

“I don’t like to say we’re private. It implies ‘you can’t come here.’ We do derive our funds from tuition, but we are open to everyone,” Gee said, noting 62 percent of students receive financial assistance to attend. “I do like the independent label we have. We don’t have people imposing a curriculum on us.”

At a time in public education when many parents and teachers are frustrated by Common Core teaching methods, Gee said the ability to break free from state Department of Education guidelines is a selling point for Allendale Columbia.

It has helped drive consistent enrollment increases, he believes, which is bucking the current trend at other independent schools across the country. Allendale, in Pittsford, serves nursery through 12th grade and opened this month with 415 students.

The National Association of Independent Schools, a nonprofit membership association that provides services to more than 1,800 schools and associations of schools in the United States and abroad, conducted a recent analysis of enrollment. A survey of enrollment change at 939 schools from the academic years 2006 to 2007 and from 2013 to 2014 showed nearly half lost students over the last decade.

“Fundamental knowledge is important, communication skills, critical thinking—we are certainly teaching those,” he said. “We also support more project-based learning. And as students move through the upper grades, we create more opportunity for choice with expanded electives such as entrepreneurship, engineering and arts options.”

Some students own their own businesses, Gee said, and are learning now the skills needed to navigate the global business world later.

There is a global emphasis to the teaching methodology Gee introduced at the school, and it is part of Allendale’s strategic plan that launched last fall. It was

“The school is far more diverse than the past,” says Michael Gee, Allendale Columbia’s head of school. Under Gee, enrollment has increased 26 percent.

designed by a committee composed of board members, faculty, parents and school leadership.

Board of trustees President Mary Beth Conway, a parent of two Allendale graduates, said she feels the school must have a global perspective with a local focus.

“There is so much to say in terms of what Mick has helped Allendale Columbia to accomplish, from a global perspective and a curricular perspective—and in terms of developing and improving a strategic plan that has already cultivated partnerships with local businesses and organizations to provide authentic learning experiences for our students. It has also provided opportunities for them to make an impact locally, regionally and internationally,” Conway said.

His ability to connect with people on all levels is one of his greatest strengths as a leader, she said. Gee believes that skill can be cultivated in students through exposure to different cultures.

“We want to develop global citizens. It helps our students understand different perspectives,” Gee said. “It’s a language and culture immersion. We need to develop a global empathy.”

The school is introducing Mandarin this fall in addition to the French and Latin it already teaches. Students travel to several countries to learn about other cultures and participate in scientific research projects. They have renovated a school in Costa Rica and helped build houses in Senegal. Next year Gee said they will travel to China and India.

Many of the projects are developed through key partnerships with national organizations such as National Geographic and the Smithsonian Institute.

Diversity is important to Gee, who is a native of the United Kingdom where he earned his bachelor of science degree in chemistry and analytical science. He was recognized there as a national teacher of excellence. He earned his master of education degree from Teachers College at Columbia University. He was selected by the Fulbright Scholarship Program and participated in their Teacher Exchange program.

Gee served as the upper school director and upper school science teacher at Winchester Thurston School in Pittsburgh for 11 years before joining Allendale Columbia.

“The school is far more diverse than the past,” Gee said, adding that the international component of the student demographics is recent. Within the past four years, the school purchased two houses with a total of 18 beds to house international students near the Allen's Creek Road campus.

“Our students come from 28 school districts, 45 different ZIP codes and 10 different countries. Thirty percent identify as students of color,” Gee said.

Allendale is reaching more families across various socioeconomic lines as well, he added. The school raised more than $1 million in its annual fund drive last year, helping to provide more financial assistance to students who cannot afford the tuition that ranges from $9,000 to $23,000, depending on grade level.

There are also scholarships based on merit available through contributions to the school from benefactors such as the Gleason family.

Gee believes the best chance at progress is through partnerships, and the school has established more than 50 relationships with businesses, educational institutions and other organizations. A recent collaboration of Rochester Institute of Technology and the Genesee Country Village and Museum led students in a project that resulted in the development of an app. The project was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

“Nobody thought kids could invent things of real use. Now we know they can do more,” Gee said. “They can solve problems by themselves and we have them doing research every day. We’re invested in the community and see ourselves as part of Rochester’s growth.”

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More AC in the news

2. Demographic data show an increase in diversity, Rochester Business Journal, bit.ly/rbjincdiv
While she was at Allendale Columbia, Victoria Paterson ’89 never could have imagined that she would end up on Broadway. Victoria transferred to AC in eighth grade and attended for five years, during which time she thought she would become a lawyer. After Allendale Columbia, she attended the Catholic University of America for two years before transferring to the University of Rochester, where she earned a degree in philosophy with a music minor. After graduating from college, she, with the support of her husband, decided to pursue her passion: playing the violin.

After playing in the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and teaching the violin in the area, Victoria decided to continue pursuing music and attended Indiana University for her master’s degree. Soon after, she and her husband moved to New York City, where she found work on Broadway after completing a national tour of Beauty and the Beast.

Victoria has played at Chelsea Clinton’s wedding, Jennifer Lopez’s baby shower, and for many of the front-running political figures of our time: Michelle Obama, Joe Biden, and Donald Trump (when he was a reality TV host on Celebrity Apprentice). She has had an incredibly successful career on Broadway, serving as the Concertmaster at The Addams Family, as the Chair at West Side Story, and now currently as Violin I at Sunset Boulevard, starring Glenn Close, with the largest on-stage orchestra in Broadway history. Even with her remarkable career and busy schedule, Victoria also graciously played at our most recent AC Alumni event at the Cornell Club last fall!
She looks back fondly on her years at Allendale Columbia, where she ran track and cross-country and was heavily involved in theatre. One of her favorite AC traditions was Strawberry Breakfast. Victoria, with the support of Mrs. Van Meter-Cline, had the idea of involving student performers to play the sword dance music. She took the initiative and transposed the music for the Breakfast during her sophomore year and was the first person to play it live at the Breakfast, where she reprised her role annually.

But most of all, Paterson remembers the faculty. “Mr. Foster was my history teacher, my track coach, my cross-country coach, and my drama teacher,” she said. “The theatre department was a really important part of my Allendale Columbia experience. Mr. Foster let us do our own thing; I wrote and produced two plays and was really involved with the performances; it was a great part of my high school career.” She describes AC as having an intense sense of familiarity; a place where she made meaningful relationships with faculty members as well as with her classmates.

Victoria credits her multidisciplinary education that she received from Allendale Columbia as a tangible launching point for her career in music. “A well-rounded education prevented me from getting burnt out, mainly because I wasn’t overly pressured into music as a young person,” she said. “Even though there wasn’t a string program at AC, I earned a strong, well-rounded education that has sustained me as a violinist well beyond graduation.”

Victoria is currently Violin I at Sunset Boulevard and performs everywhere from Carnegie Hall, Birdland, and Madison Square Garden, to Late Night with Seth Meyers, to The Today Show. She is the founder of the Lumiere String Quartet, which performs all over New York City and her albums report top-selling classical sales at Amazon and iTunes. Her favorite outreach work is performing for Music That Heals at hospitals all around New York City. Paterson studied at the Eastman School of Music and Indiana University. She resides in New York City with award-winning composer and husband, Robert Paterson, and their beautiful boy, Dylan.
It was a record setting year for attendance at the annual alumni holiday celebration, hosted by the Alumni Association, at Pomodoro Grill and Wine Bar in Rochester. Over 120 people came together to ring in the holidays!

Link to more photos: allendalecolumbia.org/holiday
Greenwich Alumni Event
October 2016

Special thanks to the alumni and friends who joined us for our first AC alumni event in Greenwich, CT, graciously hosted by Scott ’81 and Michele Blair.

New York City Alumni Event
October 2016

Nearly 40 alumni and guests joined us at The Cornell Club to hear Head of School Mick Gee share exciting news from the school and to visit with one another and former faculty members Bob Moore and Lorraine Van Meter-Cline. Special thanks to Stephen Ashley P ’86, ’88, ’92 for his support of this event!
A strong desire to make a positive impact on our youth and a natural wish to honor his family legacy fueled Frank Grosso to create the Grosso Family Scholarship at Allendale Columbia School several years ago. Inspired by the way his scholarship shaped one student's life, Frank recently increased his commitment by including AC in his estate plans. Frank recently shared, “The efficacy of giving is palpable. You feel it. This is such a personal thing, and you are helping somebody.”

The Grosso family is devoted to extending their multi-generational AC legacy to future students. Their connection to AC started in the fall of 1948 when Frank’s late wife and love of his life, Diane Holahan Grosso ’52 attended high school at the Columbia School. After getting married, Frank and Diane actually lived on the AC campus in the “Honeymoon Cottage” that once stood sandwiched between the nursery school building where Kay Shed taught, now known as Cleveland House, and the AC driveway. Diane’s student experience made such a positive impact on her that they decided to send their son Chris ’85 to Allendale Columbia. “While it was difficult to pay the tuition, the best thing we ever did was send him to Allendale Columbia. I understand that most current AC families also find it difficult, and now I am in the position to do something about it.”

After Diane passed away, Frank wanted to honor her; and he changed his legacy strategy. He included Chris in his estate planning and decided to focus on impact. “Our original wills had a more sprinkling effect, giving money to a whole series of organizations, but we decided that it was more meaningful and strong to give a significant gift to a special organization.”

Even though Frank did not attend Allendale Columbia, his desire to honor his family and support our “nation’s next generations” inspired him to change his will. “Legacy and family are everything; it is passing the torch and giving. I would like my money to go to my family and to a place we care about and who will use it wisely.”

Frank and his family have and will continue to make an enormously positive, if not life-changing, difference in the lives of future generations of AC students. “Sometimes I get letters that say ‘if it were not for your scholarship, I would not be here,’ and it feels so nice to know we are helping. I am proud of the students we have supported and their accomplishments. I can’t think of a better place to support.”
The Grosso family: planning together

The celebration of our 125-year history in 2016 reinvigorated the Allendale Columbia community. It is an opportune time to rename our planned giving society. As a result, effective July 1st, 2017, we will modify the name of the Century II Society to the Legacy Leadership Circle. Now well into our second century, we are grateful to everyone who has put our community at the top of their planned giving priorities with a vision to leave a life-changing legacy at Allendale Columbia School.

Make a gift, leave a legacy

The Legacy Leadership Circle celebrates members of the Allendale Columbia community who make a planned gift through their wills or living trusts, designate the school as the beneficiary of a life insurance plan or a retirement account, or fund a life income gift for the benefit of the school. Legacy Leadership Circle members share a desire to make it possible for their support to extend beyond their lifetime to have a lasting impact on the AC community.

Your planned gift has a lasting impact

Today’s planned gifts will help to provide extraordinary possibilities for the unscripted future and ensure the school’s strength and long-term success.

You can make an impact on the lives of Allendale Columbia students for generations to come by crafting your own thoughtful legacy. AC offers a variety of mutually beneficial planned giving tools that can match your priorities and provide different benefits, including lifetime income, capital gains tax savings, and income tax deduction.

Legacy Leadership Circle Members

This list represents the alumni, parents, grandparents, faculty, and friends who are members of the Legacy Leadership Circle. Their legacies will have an everlasting impact on Allendale Columbia School and we are grateful for their generosity. Thank you!

Anonymous
Anonymous §
Mr. Quintus and Mrs. Sondra Anderson
Mrs. Barbara Andrews
Jane Arnoldy ’35 §
Mrs. Kathleen Ballard §
John Bush, Jr. ’52 §
Lisa Campbell ’83 †
Mr. Thomas Carter
Ernestine Chandler
Realtor E. Cherne §
Donald R. Clark, Jr.
Mary Whipple Clark §
Marjorie Cleveland §
Dorothy Coakley
Cathy Cole ’63 §
Agnes Curtis ’19 §
Ms. Deborah Curtis
Ted and Claire Curtis ’47
Barbara Dana ’43 §
Justin P. Doyle
Lala Eisenhart §
Anne Foulkes §
Mr. Thomas Frey and Mrs. Jacqueline Cady
Mr. Richard J. ’46 § and Mrs. Ann ’46 Garrett, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Garrett, Jr. ’70 §
Mr. and Mrs. Fred H. Gordon, Jr. §
Georgia Gosnell ’47 §
Mr. Philippe ’96 and Mrs. Shannah ’96 Gouvernet
Mrs. Diane Holahan Grosso ’52 § and Mr. Frank Grosso
Janet Gulbeck
Henrietta Ann Hamilton ’37 §
Chuck Hertrick and Joan Gerrity §
Dr. Stephen ’03 and Mrs. Caroline ’06 Hill †
Eric Hoard, Jr. ’46 §
Christopher and Joanna Hodgman §
Mrs. Hugh Hunter ’58
Christine Wassdorp
Hurtado, MD
Raymond P. Hylan §
Elizabeth Jackson-Renner
Ebets Judson ’64 † §
Mr. Paul and Mrs. Judy Linehan
Nancy ’42 and James Mangan §
Dorothy O. Marsland §
Warren Marsland ’54 §
Sally N. McGuicken ’58 and John McGuicken ’53 §§
Mary Meyer ’45 §
Eleanor Morris ’36 §
Mr. Thaddeus ’53 and Mrs. Sherley ’57 Newell, III
Nancy Northup ’77
Mary Phillips
James B. Reveley §
Mrs. Mary Reveley
Henry Rohrer, Jr. §
Jon L. ’55 and Katherine T. § Schumacher
Mrs. Patricia Allen Shellard
Carol Slocum Siebert ’44 § and Thomas Siebert ’45
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Silver ’42
Della Simpson §§
Mrs. Helen Small ’79 §
Anna Smith ’53 §
Jean Hagen Smith ’39 and William Smith §
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Stern ’63
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tait, II ’75 †
Elisabeth Vaughan ’35 §
Mr. Erik and Mrs. Judy von Bucher
Jane Hunter Walsh ’85
Gary Warren
Jessica Warren ’44 §
Alfred Wedd, Jr. ’45 §
Mrs. Cathy Westerfeld
Jin Xiao
Dr. Mohammed Ziauddin

List key:
† Trustee
§ Current and Past Faculty/Staff
§§ Deceased

For more information about planned giving or the Legacy Leadership Circle, please contact the Development Office at 585.641.5234 or development@allendalecolumbia.org.
For six weeks each summer, AC comes alive with students from School #17 attending our Summer LEAP program designed to foster a love of learning — while eliminating summer learning loss.

**Come visit AC Summer LEAP this year:**

Tours on Tuesdays, July 11 to August 1.

To learn more, contact Lindsey Brown at 585.697.4958 or lbrown@allendalecolumbia.org.

**Discover your SUMMER**

Summer is meant to be enjoyed. That’s why the Summer Enrichment Program at Allendale Columbia School gives kids the chance to explore their interests in fun, challenging, and always-exciting ways.

**Over 40 full- and half-day programs, including:**

- Weird Science
- Music Theatre
- Photography and Painting
- Spy Academy
- Tennis, Baseball, Basketball, and Fencing

Open to kids ages 4 and up. Enrollment is open to the public, but spaces are limited—register today.

To register or for more information about all of our Summer Programs, visit allendalecolumbia.org/summerprogram.