



Evelyn's Wishes

Newsletter of the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc.

Annual Meeting 2020: 'Remote' Meeting Reports Record Awards and Positive Results

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, now in its 127th year, held its Annual Meeting via remote Zoom conferencing in compliance with prudent Coronavirus precautions. The remote meeting was nonetheless well attended, electing two new Directors put forward by our Nominating Committee Chairman Evan Griswold: Cyndi Miller Aird and Michael Ganey. They will begin three-year terms and succeed retiring Directors Fred Behringer and Leslie Massa, whose three-year terms had expired.

Also nominated and elected at the meeting for one-year terms were President Rowland Ballek, Vice President Mary Seidner, and Secretary/Treasurer Judith Read.

The meeting reviewed and approved a change in the Foundation's bylaws. Under the existing bylaws, Directors were only allowed to serve for a three-year term and could not be re-elected to the Board for at least one more year's absence. The approved change allows Directors to serve, provided they are re-elected, for an additional consecutive three-year term.

President Ballek announced that our awards had gone up substantially: a record \$422,700 went to 128 students for the 2020-2021 academic year. He said the increase in awards this year could be traced to two factors:

First, we had a larger number of applicants because students now

could apply online. He thanked Mary Seidner and Administrative Manager Ned Perkins for making this application process possible: it saves time and reams of paper, yet yields more applicants.

Indeed, these applicants continue to reflect the strength of our entire school system.

The second factor affecting the increase in MacCurdy Salisbury applications was the disruption of family incomes due to Covid-19. Financial Aid Consultant Sean Martin reported that the average family contribution for this year's tuition was just north of \$20,000, which was a drop from \$30,000 last year. And the drop is being felt at large institutions as well: an article in a regional CT Examiner reports that our Connecticut State College and University System shows a 15 percent reduction in community-college enrollment so far this year. That's translated into a \$16 million dollar loss on top of the system's already \$52 million deficit.

Student checks were sent out in late August due to delays in the college admission process and uncertainty of how some colleges would accommodate entering students.

On a positive note, Investment Committee David Kelsey reported at the meeting that the Foundation's Endowment Fund had increased 9.2 percent over the past 12 months, the result of conservative management—plus the valued contributions of our local residents. ■

Griswold and Umberger Awards Support Student Excellence



Emily Speckhals and Ryan McTigue

ANOTHER TRADITION was observed this year when the Foundation named the recipients of two \$500 awards. The W.E.S. Griswold Valedictorian Award was presented to Ryan McTigue, who is attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and the Willis Umberger Salutatorian Award was presented to Emily Speckhals, who is at Cornell University in Ithaca.

For Ryan, math and the sciences—especially physics—attracted him, with excursions into music in the wind ensemble and as a serious rower in crew. Emily, a potential major in computer science or engineering, was inspired by design and fabrication work in the school Robotics team, and running in cross-country and track.

Despite the setbacks caused by the Covid pandemic, each

New Directors Join MacCurdy's Board

TWO NEW DIRECTORS, Cyndi Miller Aird and Michael Ganey, have joined the Board of MacCurdy Salisbury as Directors. They will serve for three-year terms.

Cyndi is looking forward to bringing her business expertise and passion for the Lyme-Old Lyme community to her new role at MacCurdy Salisbury. Cyndi has lived in Old Lyme for the past 19 years and has been an active community member, serving as incoming Vice Chair for the Child and Family Thames West Auxiliary, past Chair for the Lymes' Youth Service Bureau, past officer for the Lyme / Old Lyme Junior Women's Club, and a Girl Scout leader.

She has spent her career in the hotel industry and for the past 20 years has operated one of the leading marketing firms for boutique resorts in the Caribbean and Latin America. Her company currently represents over 25 luxury hotel properties. Before opening her own firm Cyndi was an executive with Meridien Hotels and Resorts in New York City.

Mike, in turn, looks forward to applying some of the insights he's gained from service as a Foundation Member, noting the Foundation's traditions of local service and its very broad outreach—spanning more than a century's worth of our students entering the academic world and the workforce.

Retired a few years ago, he had been at Pfizer in Groton where he was a Vice President in Pfizer Worldwide Research and Development. Mike has served as a Trustee and Board Chair of High Hopes Therapeutic Riding; he and his wife, Patty, have lived in Lyme-Old Lyme for more than 25 years with their three sons. ■



Griswold and Umberger Awards Support Student Excellence (continued from page 1)

student appears optimistic about the immediate future. Ryan notes in his graduation address that, "I am sure that all of you have your own memories that stem from . . . seemingly insignificant moments. We should all take a little time to look back on them, and realize what they mean to each of us individually. I implore each of you to keep finding those moments—whenever they come—so that we can continue to find comfort and happiness in them.

"Keep making these memories, big or small, blunder or genius. Those will continue to define us, and keep us grounded, even in times like these."

Emily, for her part, offers solid advice to graduates of any age: "I think something we could all try to remember as we move out of the familiar bubble of Lyme-Old Lyme High School is the importance of trying new things and seeing what sticks.

"You could end up finding your people in a group you never even quite planned to join.

"So that's my little bit of advice for us, myself included, to try to remember to put ourselves out there." ■

Elizabeth Willis Thompson Puts Philosophy to Work



TOWN PALS taking a break recently: Carrie Rehkopf Hartwick and Chloe Hartwick, Kim Fiore Smith, Kim Greene Bleach, Amy Varley Lippincott, Liz Willis Thompson and Zoe Hartwick.

PHILOSOPHY, that once-most-rarified and demanding of vocations, has many uses—not the least of which are understanding, and managing, the stresses of transitions.

Elizabeth Willis Thompson, of the Class of 1992 from Williams School, started in first grade at “the beautiful Center School on Lyme Street where I met my would-be lifelong friends,” she recalls.

She thoroughly enjoyed her pastimes through Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School before transferring to Williams School in New London. That, in turn, landed her in Union College in Schenectady, New

York, and there she embarked on scholarly analyses of how, and why, people make “life decisions” that alter their development and society’s directions.

Her own decisions and transitions during her past were not always easy, though Liz was well-prepared for change.

The Navy helped, too, like it or not.

“I was born in New London and brought home to Griswold Avenue in Old Lyme, where my parents built our first home. My Mom, Dad, and big brother, Chris, soon thereafter moved me to Ventura County, California, for the first few years of my life. Back then, my father was in the Navy, a submariner out of Groton, and had been relocated to the West Coast.”

“So, we had roots in this area. My parents had both graduated from Valley Regional High School. My dad, Gary Willis, is a VRHS Hall of Famer. He played every sport. Really well! Mom is Pamela Pape Ryan, who later created a longstanding retail women’s clothing store, The Bermuda Shop, in Mystic.”

“Yet, typical of the Navy, we were fortunate enough to return to Old Lyme just after the beginning of my kindergarten year at the beautiful Center School on Lyme Street—where I met my enduring friends.

“I remember that my favorite teacher in Lyme Old Lyme school systems was Sharon Knapp. I was lucky enough to have her in 3rd grade, 4th grade, and again in Middle School. I do feel that her teachings in English helped me with my writing later in my college years.”

Not all transitions are easy, Liz found.

“Despite its opportunities to learn I was devastated at leaving my core group from town to transfer to Williams,” says Liz. “It was traumatic. But if I knew at the time my town friends would remain lifelong touchstones, I wouldn’t have complained (as much)!”

“At Williams, I graduated with high honors in 1992; I played tennis in high school and was the statistician for indoor and outdoor boy’s soccer, sang in our school’s chorus and Madrigals group, and performed in several theatrical performances. and then attended Union College, graduating Cum Laude in 1996 with a B.A. degree in Philosophy/Women’s Studies—and fortunately a series of honors and awards for which I am quite humbly grateful.”

Liz remains grateful to her academic guidance as well. One example, she says, is an ongoing teacher-student bond which links her past and present. “The person who helped me to excel at Williams was my English

teacher, Thomas Kelly of New London; he was, and still is, my mentor. We have maintained a relationship from my Freshman year in high school through today.”

Outside the classroom in college, and possibly influenced by Old Lyme’s Blood Street Sculls’ prowess in rowing, she recounts that “I rowed crew at Union and helped spearhead the effort to turn our club team into a varsity sport. We gained varsity status my junior year.”

But her real work was in philosophy, an area that brings to bear multiple disciplines, she asserts. “At Union, I was the co-founding editor of the Journal of Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Philosophical Thought. I was awarded a Pew Grant for innovative projects outside of the classroom and was responsible for selection, editing, and preparation of papers by fellow students for print.

“I also received a Union College Dana Fellowship to write a manuscript with my very favorite mentor, Professor Linda Patrik, called ‘Knowing What is Good For Ourselves: A Cross-Generational Examination (1995).’ It is a philosophical examination of how we, as humans, make important life decisions and it was the culmination of my studies in Stoic, Existential, and Eastern Philosophy as well as Traditional Ethical Theory.”

But looming outside the classroom, an unexpected, and sad, turn of national news brought her new skills to the fore.

“My personal ‘fun fact’—if it can be called ‘fun’—is assisting in writing a manuscript in 1995 with Professor Patrik, who was in fact the sister-in-law of the so-called Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. Classed as an “American domestic terrorist,” during 20 years Kaczynski killed three people and injured many more by sending bombs through the mail to support his brilliant, but demented, personal beliefs.

Liz explains that, “I worked closely with Professor Patrik for a whole summer. Linda and her husband, David Kaczynski, went to Paris to get out of town and to read through all Ted’s correspondence with David’s and Ted’s mother. It was that summer that the family’s meticulous scholarship led them to a disturbing conclusion: Ted was, in fact, the Unabomber.”

“Linda and I finished our project that summer via fax, which, at the time, seemed so technologically advanced,” Liz remembers, adding that “I will never forget that Professor Patrik couldn’t attend my graduation because there was too much media attention surrounding her! But she apologized profusely; I completely forgave her,” Liz smiles.

But behind it all was a turning point back in Old Lyme during her high-school years.

Liz stresses that, “Along with all those academic awards and honors was the MacCurdy-Salisbury award grant. The annual award recognized my origins in the Old Lyme school system, and came at the start of my college career. MacCurdy was to be the catalyst for a long line of successes for me.

“Just out of college, I got married and moved to Boston and for five years worked for a company called Animation Technologies. We were a classic ‘dot-com’ startup in the late 1990’s. We worked with law firms, providing visual trial aids to help explain things that were difficult to explain with words. My position was Marketing Manager.

“After my son, Finn, was born in 2004, I opened a sister store to my mom’s Mystic store, but in Boston’s South Shore in Cohasset, called The Bermuda Shop North. Both my children, Finn and Piper (born two years after her big brother), were ‘founders’ of that store location. Eventually, we closed Bermuda Shop North in 2013 and I moved back here and I happily started working for an Old Lyme friend, Molly Soper, who owns Cortland Park, designers of specialty cashmere sweaters. I help her

MacCurdy PROFILE



Despite Challenges, Kris Lantz Thomas Looks Forward, and Gives Back

For some of us, youth was a long, slow, delightful process of facing predictable challenges and overcoming them, one by one, with clear rewards. "Golden days, in the sunshine of a happy youth . . . Golden days, full of gaiety and full of truth," as an old song says.

WHAT DOES GAIETY MEAN?

Definition of gaiety in the Definitions.net dictionary. Meaning of gaiety. What does gaiety mean? Information an...

For some others, the challenges came early and were wholly unexpected.

For Kristine Lantz of the Lyme-Old Lyme Class of 1990, the challenges came early, demanding a level of maturity and determination not often required.

Kris moved to Old Lyme in 1978, the year she started Kindergarten in Mile Creek School with, she recalls, Mrs. Jean Cade as her teacher.

"My Mom, Mary Jane, was a stay-at-home mom, a Brownie leader, and softball coach for my friends and me," remembers Kris. "But she was diagnosed with breast cancer shortly after my brother was born in 1975 and passed away in 1982 when I was 10. As the oldest kid of three, I grew up quickly after that; I did a lot of taking care of my sister, Keri, and my brother, Kyle, cooking and cleaning at home. Yes, I was too young," she smiles wryly.

Her father, Ken, had a lot on his hands too, she says. "Dad also spent a lot of time caring for my Mom when he moved his work closer and became a State Corrections Officer in Niantic."

High school came up fast and Kris plunged in. With little interest in or time for sports, she was a yearbook editor, peer counselor, member of Amnesty International and of "Eden," which was Mrs. Alice Burbank's literary group. Mrs. Burbank was "the awesome liberal woman teacher" with tough English classes. Kris also favored language classes with other favorites, like Ms. Angela Gulielmetti in Spanish and Mrs. Marlene Estabrooks in Latin. At graduation, she won a Presidential Academic Fitness Award.

"With family at home and college on my horizon, I always worked while in school," Kris recalls. "There was the front desk and cleaning rooms at the Old Lyme Inn, help at the Beach Donut Shop in Sound View, and babysitting, and cleaning houses—I had so much responsibility at home."

MacCurdy Salisbury helped her make a daring step forward.

"I felt I really needed to go out of state to college. The MacCurdy award I received was incredibly helpful in making that happen!"

She chose the University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire, which offered both theoretical and applied courses.

"I loved hanging out in Portsmouth!" Kris says. "My major was sociology with a lot of interest in Women's Studies classes. I graduated in 1994, and then went to the Philadelphia Institute for Employee Benefits Training, where I received my Employee Benefits Paralegal Certification."

Then it was back to work. "Immediately after certification I got a job at a Third Party Administrator firm in Manchester, New Hampshire, and then after a few years came back to Connecticut and started working for the late Mark Wells as a Retirement Plan Administrator in Branford. He introduced me to my now ex-husband, Sean Thomas, and after Mark passed away, Sean and I took over the business. We are now called Wells Thomas, LLC, where I am Managing Principal.

"We are a firm of 19 right now; we have one retiring and we are hiring three new people this month, so we have been growing steadily."

As business partners, Sean and Kris share duties: Sean does new business and consulting, and she is in charge of day-to-day operations, administration, and compliance. Kris says, "I review the work of our senior administrators, consult on plan design and compliance issues, and represent clients in front of the Internal Revenue Service and/or Department of Labor, if they have audits or corrective matters at that level."

Kris reflects on the flexibility required from graduating students these days, and the opportunities in professional retirement planning. "It is a great career that isn't taught in schools, so we invest a lot of time in training the right people to become retirement-plan administrators. Our clients are small- to medium-sized businesses, from one to 1500 employees, and we offer regular administration in addition to 3(16) Fiduciary services."

Kris now has children of her own: Ethan, 19; Paige, 18 in December; and Andrew, 14. It's a bit of a flashback, she says. "Paige is a senior in high school now, so we are going through that process of college searches—but it is very weird in times of the Covid virus, without real visits or tours of schools."

And there's the classic "giving back" that she absorbed on her own in her home and high-school days. "I have been involved with a group called She's Speaking which started community activities to give voices to girls, particularly in the middle-school years. We also raised funds and established a scholarship for seniors at Valley Regional and Old Saybrook High Schools. We were working toward becoming an independent, non-profit organization, but that's been pretty much put on hold due to Covid."

Looking back, Kris reflects on her present direction, as well.

"When my Dad passed away, the most touching thing I saw in his papers was the box of 'stuff'—poems, cards, letters, artwork filled with love and good wishes from the inmates at the women's prison in Niantic. They called him 'Papa Lantz.' He was a good guy who treated people with respect no matter their situation.

"And that's what I aspire to be." ■

New Heights, New Records; But Will College Ever Be The Same?

SINCE EARLY SPRING we have been dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic event that has affected all our personal and professional lives—including the year-'round efforts of the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation. Applications are sought are reviewed, budgets are organized, and awards are determined. Even with powerful computer support, many of these tasks require face-to-face meetings. This year, however, our meetings were held via telephone and by Zoom videoconferencing.

We were also forced to cancel one of our highlights, the Annual Awards Reception traditionally held in June, where we announce recipients of Foundation grants. The reception allows student recipients and their parents to meet school and town officials and MacCurdy members in an informal setting, and to formally receive the first of their awards.

But these were minor inconveniences compared with what the students we serve had to cope with. In particular, they had to make their own key decisions. Which school to attend—for example, would it be a preferred choice, or perhaps something closer to home? In addition to evaluating campus and curriculum, the choice meant examining the probability of a student's "virtual learning" from home—or, at the same cost, being confined to their dorm room on campus without the traditional social experience of college, including athletic programs or cultural events.

It is thus understandable that a few of our grant recipients chose to take a pass on this fall's semester or perhaps chose to miss the entire academic year. After all, they correctly reason, why pay, in some cases, almost \$70,000 for what would amount to a very-selective correspondence school? Not that college

admissions have become "easier." The process has become, according to a former editor of the Chronicle of Higher Education, both more transparent and more complex, their admissions processes giving "an aura of precision to what is largely abstract." Is that helpful in making a choice?

Grades and SAT scores do matter: our students' experience at Lyme Old Lyme High School greatly helps our local students gain entry to the schools of their choice. This past summer we were rated as one of the top ten schools in Connecticut—meeting or exceeding expectations on English and Math by scoring 85.9 percent in English SAT and 75 percent in Math SAT scores. We were the only town east of the Connecticut river on the top 10 list.

Indeed, these applicants continue to reflect the strength of our entire school system and so it is worth remarking on the big picture.

Our school recognition included favorable national rankings. In late October Lyme-Old Lyme High School received a prestigious College Success Award from GreatSchools.org, which honors schools that "excel in ensuring students prepare for college, enroll in college, and succeed once they get there." The award-winning schools from 29 states demonstrated a successful track record of graduating students who are ready for college-level coursework, and then persist onto their second year. Lyme-Old Lyme High School is one of 52 schools in Connecticut to receive this year's award.

Further, In Connecticut, 207 high schools were analyzed for the annual U.S. News and World Report's national survey of 17,792 schools. Out of this number we were 17th in the state when the April survey was announced.

Regional District 18 Superintendent Ian Nevaizer said that, "It's nice to get some positive feedback, recognition, and news even during this strange time."

So our MacCurdy students overcame challenges and anxieties not entirely caused by viruses! And we are not alone at all: nationally, other students faced tough choices also—the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center reported that the count of first-year student college enrollment dropped by 16.1 percent this fall.

Finally, it's with pleasure that I can report that total student awards for all classes we support was a record \$422,000 for 128 scholars attending colleges throughout the country.

As usual, awards are based on the amount of financial support a student needs, and if they achieve a satisfactory grade point level the awards will continue for their four academic years of undergraduate studies. We are pleased to announce once again two outstanding students, who are the recipients of our W.E.S Griswold Award for Valedictorian, and our Willis Umberger Award for Salutatorian. Bill Griswold and Willis Umberger served the Foundation for decades, and guided hundreds of our students to success.

Despite the pandemic, both the students and our community came through. Making our record awards contribution possible were the many generous contributions made by our local residents to our Annual Appeal. This overwhelming support from our community has enabled us to give out more than three million dollars to local students over the past eleven years . . . a powerful vote of confidence and faith in the future.

I hope this rate of support will continue again for the coming year. ■

market the sweaters to unique boutiques throughout the United States." But there's still a lot more to it.

"I have to mention," she smiles, "another transition that has its roots in Old Lyme. I am now engaged to my best friend's cousin, Christian Cole. We met at his mother's funeral. Having known my best friend, Amy Lippincott, since we were 4, I never met her cousin—Chris—until that day. The rest is history.

"In fact, my long-term goal is to go back to school for my Master's degree in social work, hoping to counsel kids going through divorce.

And, more happily, perhaps, I'd like to write a fictional book about growing up with my friends on the shoreline in Old Lyme.

"So I like to think that MacCurdy linked my past and present in so many ways! I am forever grateful for this particular award. All the ways my hometown contributed to my academic experience—I couldn't be more thankful to this day!" ■



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The MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation has a long-standing tradition of providing financial support to local students going on to further their education at colleges and universities after their high-school years. Founded by Evelyn MacCurdy Salisbury in 1893, the Foundation was originally named the Lyme High School Association, and helped support educational activities in Old Lyme. It began giving direct grants to students from Old Lyme to continue their education beyond high school in 1918. In 1939, the name was changed to the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation. In 1973 Berenice Brevillier started the Lyme portion of the fund at the Foundation so students from both towns—the majority of which attend the Regional District 18 school system—could participate. In 2016 the Old Lyme and Lyme funds merged to better serve the students from both towns.

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This newsletter is funded by



Postal Customer

MacCurdy Seeks Memories, Photos

Remember your Old Lyme High School graduation, back in the good ol' days? You and your classmates were feeling happy, honored, lucky? If you received a MacCurdy award to help you move on to higher education, we'd like to hear your story: where did you go on to? And what are you doing now?

Your short reminiscences, and perhaps a photo or two from the present and/or the past, would be welcome. You may email us or write a note. After checking back with you, we may use your contribution in a future issue of Evelyn's Wishes and other publications celebrating the Foundation's service . . . and we will return the original photos. Remember, you are part of our history!

MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc. 2020-2021 Membership

Officers

| Officers | Year Joined |
|---|-------------|
| Rowland Ballek, <i>President</i> | 1975 |
| Mary Seidner, <i>Vice President</i> | 2000 |
| Judith Read, <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> | 2011 |

Board

| | | | |
|---------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| Cyndi Miller Aird | 2019 | Michael Ganey | 2019 |
| Nicki Berry | 2008 | Kevin McGlinchey | 2017 |
| Dr. Matthew Cantner | 2018 | Thomas Richardson | 2016 |

Board of Education Representatives

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|-------------------|------|--------------|------|
| Winnie Bing Edmed | 2015 | Paula Gaudet | 2018 |
| Jennifer Burke | 2009 | | |

Members

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|----------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
| Steven Ames | 2004 | Kenneth Levin | 2007 |
| Christopher Arnold | 2007 | Scott Mahon | 2017 |
| Andy Baxter | 2008 | Leslie Massa | 2000 |
| Fred Behringer | 2016 | Steve Olstein | 2019 |
| Rev. Rebecca Crosby | 2005 | John Pfeiffer | 2005 |
| James Fairfield-Sonn | 2013 | Matthew Sharp | 2013 |
| Rev. Carleen Gerber | 1986 | Thomas Sherer | 1997 |
| Katie Gingras | 2019 | David Speirs | 1981 |
| Leslie Gourlay | 2011 | Ralph Sturges | 1998 |
| Evan Griswold | 2012 | Michael Walker | 1996 |
| Matthew Griswold XI | 2015 | George Willauer | 1976 |
| Tim Griswold | 1975 | | |
| Dr. Gregory Hack | 2003 | Thomas McGarry, Esq. | 1969 |
| Jeffrey Hartmann | 2009 | <i>Legal Advisor</i> | |
| Susan Hessel | 2005 | Ned Perkins | |
| David Kelsey | 2017 | <i>Administrative Manager</i> | |