

The Spirit

VOLUME XXV FALL 2023



IN THIS ISSUE

Commencement 2023 | The Green Team | Pennfield's Enrichment Program



JOY • UNDERSTANDING • RESPECT

Little Slocum Farm
110 Sandy Point Avenue
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871
401.849.4646 • pennfield.org

PRESCHOOL (AGE 3) – EIGHTH GRADE

Mission

The mission of The Pennfield School is to create an inclusive community of dedicated learners, where students are given a foundation and appreciation for the joyful pursuit of understanding, while fostering respect for oneself and others as a way of life.

Core Values

We are committed to creating an environment in which everyone is treated with kindness and respect.

We are committed to being a joyful place, where students learn by example: the importance of honesty, integrity, generosity and humor.

We are committed to providing a challenging and balanced curriculum, enabling our students to succeed at a wide variety of secondary schools and beyond.

We are committed to fostering a strong partnership between faculty, students and parents.

We are committed to creating an inclusive culture that is diverse in make-up, is accepting of others, and helps develop a strong sense of social and community responsibility.

We are committed to embracing the uniqueness of every member of our community and providing the individual attention needed to help each student's talents unfold.

We are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment in which students are encouraged to take academic, artistic and athletic risks.

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Message from the Head of School

Open House

Friday, January 26
8:15 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Valentine's Day Bake Sale

Wednesday, February 14
8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Talent Show

Friday, March 8
1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Corporation Meeting

Thursday, April 25
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Mark Bistline Golf Tournament

Monday, May 13
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Toast on the Terrace

Monday, May 13
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

School Play

Friday, May 24
6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Commencement

Thursday, June 13
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Each school day drop-off begins with “Good Morning” and “Hello” to our students and their families. I cannot imagine a better way to start the day. Each enthusiastic greeting from students and parents makes it impossible for me to be grumpy. It is a better wake-me-up than a Dunkin’ coffee with an extra espresso shot. I head into assembly with an added bounce in my step. Why? Because that is what makes The Pennfield School so special and so different from other institutions. We are a happy community.

Community! Oxford defines community as: a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. Sounds like Pennfield! We are also a generous community. Generosity comes in many forms, and during the past year hundreds of volunteers served Pennfield in many different capacities, investing time and talent, strengthening our programming, and giving unselfishly to ensure that Pennfield lives for at least another 52 years. Speaking of giving unselfishly, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation for all that Rob Kelley did in his 18 years of service. Pennfield is a wonderful school environment, and Rob and Ann are responsible for the myriad of great things that Pennfield is known for in the community. Thank you, Rob, for creating a rich educational environment and for building on history and traditions that inspire us daily. I am grateful that I can follow in your footsteps.

I assumed the Head of School position this past July. I had shared throughout the interview process and subsequent conversations, project-based learning, place-based curriculum, and experiential education comprise a large part of my educational philosophy and pedagogy. All signs indicate that schools must evolve and change in the future; tomorrow’s workers will be relationship builders, collaborators, and innovators. While there remains a need for traditional classroom academic rigor, Pennfield must also offer students opportunities that allow them to grow in heart and spirit. We want them to become confident and feel safe stepping out of their comfort zones. Studies show that students exposed to project-based learning have a higher degree of academic success, are more creative, and master what were once known as the soft skills of collaboration, innovation, and relationship building.

How do we do that? Our faculty. Over 95% of parents who responded to a school-wide survey this past May are extremely satisfied and believe the faculty are the heart and soul of our community. Typically, that number hovers around 55% satisfaction in other school surveys when asked a comparable question. As we dive into the work to design Pennfield’s Strategic Plan, a primary goal of mine is to secure the resources to provide compensation packages that appropriately enhance the quality of life for our faculty and their families.

Thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners for supporting our critical efforts to develop good human beings. There has never been a more important time for Pennfield to exist. Having spent the majority of my career in college preparatory high schools, I am convinced that preschool–8th grade are the years where students discover who they are, how they learn, and how to make a positive difference.

This year’s Spirit celebrates Pennfield and highlights your generosity to our community. Simply put, without you Pennfield would not exist.

Respectfully,



Paul Amadio
HEAD OF SCHOOL



Snapshots 2022-23



Opening Day of School



Grandparents Day



Fall Festivity



Thanksgiving Feast



Snowball Semi-Formal



Ice Skating Party



Spelling Bee



Bingo Night



8th Grade vs. Faculty Basketball



Spirit Week



Arts Week



Earth Day



Winnie the Pooh



Lessons Learned

Pennfield nurtures skills and traits that will lead to success.

Excerpts from commencement speaker, Megan Fantes, '10

known that people get asked to speak at events like this. The school did so much for me, and I dreamed of the opportunity to give a little bit back to Pennfield and be asked to return and share my thoughts on my time here.

There are things that I'm known for, admired for, and respected for in my life today that I can trace directly back to my time at Pennfield.

PUBLIC SPEAKING – As you all may know every 6th, 7th, and 8th grader has to give an assembly speech every year, so from the time I was 12 years old I was practicing giving speeches to a crowd of 100 or more. Today, in my corporate job, I'm known for being a good public speaker. I'm known for running a good meeting, giving a good talk, and giving a good presentation because I've been practicing since I was in 6th grade.

SHOW EXCITEMENT – When I was in 5th grade I had a brief time where I was very excited about poetry and I would check out all of the kids' poetry books from the library. One day, I came across a poem called "The Tiger" that I really liked. I ran up to Mr. Kelley and asked, "Can I read this poem in assembly tomorrow, I really like it." Because I was so excited about it he let me read it in front of the school for no reason at all. So I learned that it is good to be excited about the things that I'm passionate about. And today I'm known for diving deep into the things that I love.

STUDY AND PREPARE – I remember the first ever science test that I needed to study for in lower school, sitting outside at recess reading through the textbook to make sure that I was ready for the test. I remember studying for my 8th grade anatomy test in Mr. B's science class and coming up with mnemonic devices with my friends to remember all the bones in the body.

I still remember patella...Nutella. The rhyme we came up with for the kneecap and our favorite snack. Learning how to study in

middle school was very useful for high school, college, getting a Master's degree, and even getting a job and promotion. I learned to LOVE learning, and it's made me a success today.

ASK QUESTIONS - Asking questions is a good thing. When Mr. Kelley was just starting as new head of school he had a big meeting with the current students. I was sitting in the front row, and I raised my hand really high to ask him a question.

Neither of us remember what the question was, but he remembers that I was excited to ask it, and he knows that he gave me an answer. So he let me be excited about asking that question, and he honored it by giving me an answer.

Be the one who asks the questions. Be the one in classes in high school that raises their hand and asks for something to be clarified, because if you have a question then somebody else in the room also has the same question.

In college I studied math, and math majors are not the most talkative people. But I was not your typical math major, because I went to Pennfield, and I was always comfortable talking in class and asking the professors questions.

When you are the one who asks questions you learn things. Asking questions does not show that you are ignorant. It shows that you want to learn more; it shows that you care. Be curious about the answers. The real magic is when you ask a question, and you care about the answer, and you listen, and you hear it. That is where beautiful learning happens, and that's where you find out new things about the world.

I thank Pennfield for nurturing my public speaking skills, my passion, my excitement, and my question asking because it has directly affected who I am today. To the 8th graders and their friends and family here today. I encourage you to all to take note of what you have learned during your time at Pennfield and remember as you go forward. It's certainly helped me in my life.

*Congratulations to the Class of 2023,
and never stop asking questions.*

Life Lessons from Ted Lasso

A Message from the Board Chair

Treat people with respect. True character is measured by how people treat others, not when they're being watched, but when they're not being watched.

Be positive. Ted represents the choice to be positive and curious, even when circumstances dictate you should be scared and afraid. You have a choice in how you see the world and your circumstances.

Kindness and respect matter. Ted is kind and generous with a helpful ear and a quirky, disarming remark. And in those remarks, one can learn and grow. Through looking at people's differences, we actually uncover universal truths like love, acceptance, purpose, and a need to belong.

Work together. Teammates need to put aside their own agendas and perspectives, and focus their collective skills and talents for the overriding goal of working together. Great things do not happen alone. You have a team and are on a team of family, siblings, friends, teachers and community.

Believe. You can't believe without confidence and confidence is only built over time through consistency of action, and trust.

Be a Goldfish. When you have done your best, and given your all, the only thing left to do when things go wrong, is be a Goldfish. Forget about the outcome and stop dwelling on it. Tomorrow will be another day, and the clock will reset once again.

Be curious, not judgmental. You can be like Ted Lasso. You can choose to see things positively, you can choose kindness and respect over ignorance and indifference. You can choose compassion and empathy over discord and apathy. You can look at things that unite rather than divide. You can look at every obstacle, every road block, every bump in the road as a lesson.

Good Luck and Congratulations!

— THEODORE KAROUSOS, P'12, '15, '18, '20



Joy in Learning

2023 AWARD WINNERS



The Lynne Eagles Coaches' Award

Presented to a male and female athlete who exemplify the spirit and goals of the Pennfield Athletic Program.

[Ainsley Moe and Bodhi Gerlach](#)

Eric W. Lawrence Art Prize

Awarded to an eighth grader who has enriched the artistic life at the school. [Logan Cournoyer](#)

The Redwood Library and Atheneum Prize in History

Presented to an eighth grader in recognition of outstanding academic achievement and a dedicated interest in history. [Madison York](#)

The Dr. Benjamin Harrison Walker, Jr., Science Prize

Awarded to an eighth grader who seeks deeper understanding of the natural world through the study of the sciences and is eager to share that passion with others.

[Ethan Scheusner](#)

The Dr. Ronald G. Zeffiro Community Service Award

Awarded to an eighth grader who has demonstrated exemplary volunteer service to a local agency in keeping with the mission of the school. [Bodhi Gerlach](#)

The Williams College Book Prize

For extracurricular activity and potential for leadership. [Logan Cournoyer](#)

The Isabelle H. Penny Prize in English

For outstanding and conscientious study and usage of the English language.

[Emerson Clemens](#)

The John R. Pedrick Award

Awarded to a Pennfield student who embodies the spirit and tenets of John R. Pedrick, by making a difference in the lives of others through kindness, respect, understanding, tolerance and compassion. [Nyree Wilson](#)

The Spanish Prize

For excellence in all aspects of the language and a strong interest in increased understanding of the world's Spanish-speaking culture. [Adelaide Rowe](#)

Jewelle Allen Math Prize

Awarded to a student who has demonstrated outstanding mathematical scholarship.

[Emerson Clemens](#)

The Pennfield School Association Spirit Award

Awarded to the eighth grader who represents the family spirit of The Pennfield School at its best through kindness to all, participation in school activities and support of the school's ideals. [Adelaide Rowe](#)

The Faculty Cup

For significant contributions to the life of The Pennfield School. [Adelaide Rowe](#)



Pennfield's Green Team: CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY

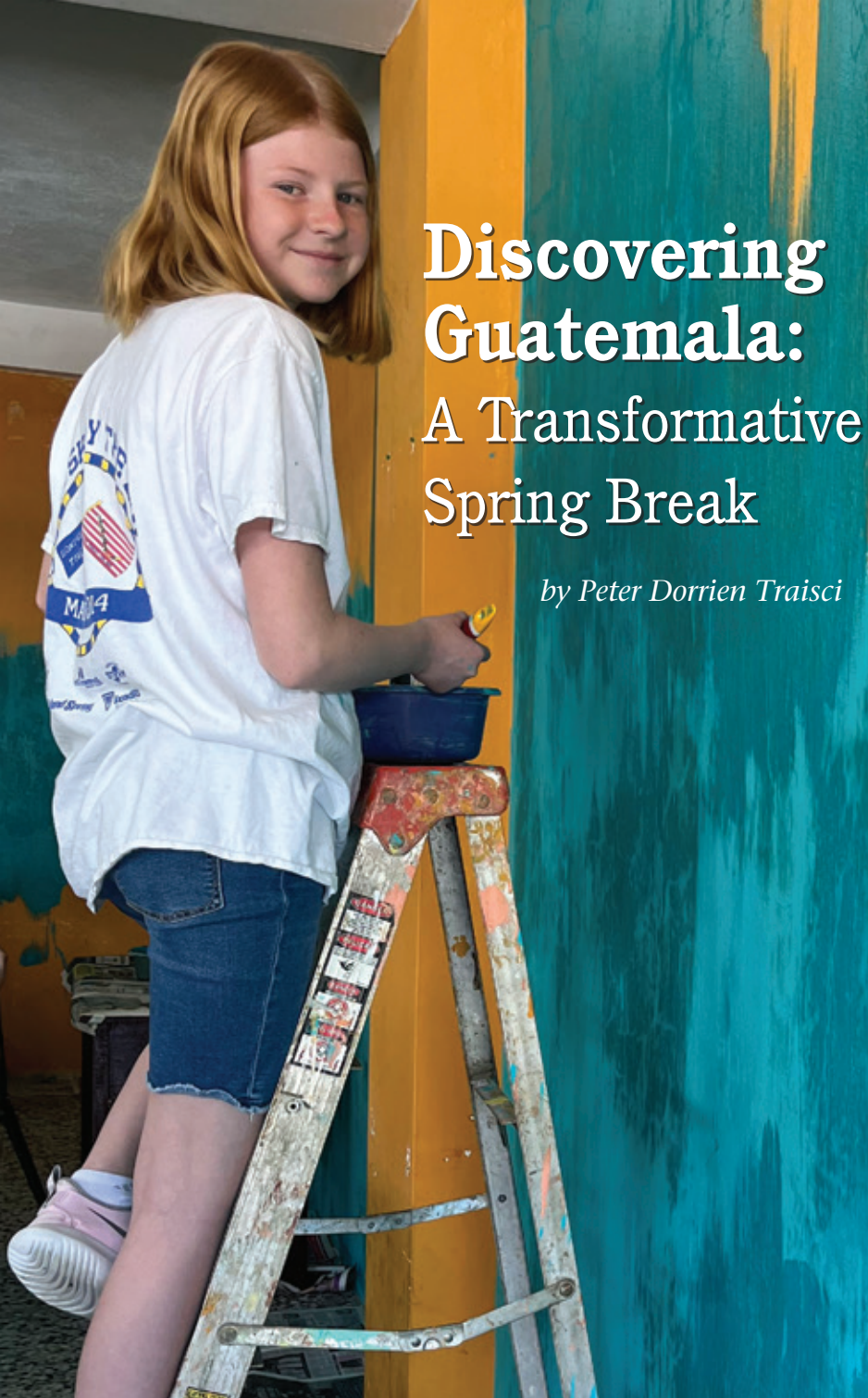
The Green Team, led by Sustainability Educator Sam Schreiber, is our newest extra-curricular offering at Pennfield. This nature driven club explores sustainability around our beautiful campus. Green Team is divided into two groups that meet after school on separate days.

Students explore different issues we as a society face and come up with great solutions to address them. Our younger students in grades 1-4 often find themselves on nature based walks around campus, learning about ideas and strategies to help our environment. They also participate in a recycling based activity each month.



Older students in grades 5-8 spend time delving into issues facing our State and Country, discussing electric vehicles, global warming, threatened species, and other environmental issues. The club is both a place for discussion and an action committee where students can develop projects that have a positive impact on the environment.

The Green Team has undergone many projects this year, but our biggest accomplishments were our composting program and our vegetable garden on the edge of campus. Our sustainability program prepares students to adopt lifelong habits that will benefit the planet.



Discovering Guatemala: A Transformative Spring Break

by Peter Dorrien Traisci

Mr. Bottone, Ms. Hardy, and I joined twenty-three of our upper school students for an unforgettable adventure over Spring Break 2023 – traveling to Guatemala to experience the culture and participate in a service project. As one student reflected, “This trip taught students and teachers a new way to view the world, uncovered personal independence, and was overall an amazing experience.”

Students began the week spending time in the city of Antigua, learning to make chocolate and climbing the 8,000 foot Pacaya Volcano! The group then traveled to the small community of San Juan La Laguna on the banks of Lake Atitlán to begin a service project painting the interior of a local elementary school. While in the town, we spent four nights in local homes, interacting with families, speaking primarily in Spanish, and experiencing their daily life.

It was important that the students understood that we were not traveling to another country to save the people there. The residents of San Juan La Laguna lead humble but very content lives. They don’t need us to save them; they just need a bit of support, and I am so grateful we were able to offer that support in a way that was meaningful and respectful.

After several days of fun, but tiring, work we were rewarded with some time to relax and soak in our surroundings. Our adventure ended with a hotel day spent at the pool and an intense zip-lining experience high above the forest floor.

I am genuinely proud to work with young people who are eager to experience cultures that are different from their own. The students’ energy, incredible work ethic, and positive spirit in the face of challenges were truly inspiring. This was not just any tourist trip but rather a meaningful exchange of language, culture, and common humanity. I am so grateful to The Pennfield School, Walking Tree Travel, and the many families that supported this international adventure. The students and group leaders will forever be changed by the kindness we experienced throughout our journey.



Honoring Excellence

On Thursday, April 20, 2023 the Pennfield Community gathered virtually and in-person to welcome new trustees, honor faculty milestones, and celebrate Pennfield Fund donors at our Annual Corporation Meeting.

Danielle Frawley and Abby Rowe celebrated their fifth year at Pennfield. Alex Fernandez '01 and Frank Tito were recognized for an impressive decade of service, and Dawn Pigott was honored for 35 years of outstanding teaching at Pennfield!

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Diman Teaching Excellence Prize, chosen by fellow faculty and given to a teacher for inspiring students to pursue academic excellence with joy and boundless enthusiasm. The 2022-23 prize was awarded to two amazing educators:

Kindergarten Teacher, Emily Johnson, and Sustainability Educator, Sam Schreiber!



Dawn Pigott – 35 years



Alex Fernandez and Frank Tito – 10 years



Abby Rowe – 5 years



Emily Johnson –
Diman Teaching Excellence Prize



Sam Schreiber –
Diman Teaching Excellence Prize



Danielle Frawley – 5 years



A Cherished Tradition Returns

The Buddy Program is a treasured community builder for The Pennfield School. Each year, older students are paired up with younger students as Buddies. Once a month, Buddies have the opportunity to meet and work together in a variety of fun and educational activities. The partnerships benefit both younger and older students by building self-esteem, communication, and empathy skills.

This beloved tradition had to be put on hold in 2020 to keep students as physically healthy as possible and maintain in-person learning, but in Fall 2022 we were thrilled to bring it back! Students and faculty alike were beyond excited for the first Buddy Day in 2 1/2 years.

Throughout the year, buddies participated in Thursday morning assembly “dance parties” and met monthly. Whether they were painting together, creating blankets for Project Linus, or working to clean up campus, the activity was secondary to the time spent laughing and building friendships.



Enriching Young Minds Through Exploration, Creativity, and Problem-Solving



We are excited to unveil the latest addition to our curriculum at The Pennfield School — the Pennfield Enrichment Program! New classes designed to enrich the education experience of our students, offering them an opportunity to discover new interests, develop important skills, and foster a sense of creativity. Classes in yoga, Makerspace, theatre, and sustainability are not intended to replace current co-curricular classes or after-school activities; instead they enhance our daily classwork.

Opportunities for All Ages

Preschool and Pre-k Yoga:

Mindfulness for Little Ones

Our preschool and pre-k students enjoy a weekly yoga class, fostering focus, self-esteem, and emotional well-being through mindfulness and physical activity. Yoga games and activities help young children learn to control their body, mind, and breath in a more intentional way.

Lower School Theatre, Yoga, and Makerspace:

A World of Creativity

Theatre: Students delve into acting techniques, character motivations, scene work, and more. Through collaboration, problem-solving, and fun, young actors unlock a world of creative thinking and gain confidence as well as an appreciation for aesthetics.

Yoga: Mindfulness practices can enhance focus, self-esteem, and academic performance. Students continue to increase their ability to connect their breath, mind, and body.

Makerspace: A world of creativity awaits this class.

From exploring unexpected ways to use Legos to inventing and problem-solving, students learn to see themselves as inventors and creators.

Upper School Theatre, Makerspace, and Sustainability: *Preparing for the Future*

Theatre: Students explore acting techniques that apply directly to real-life situations, from learning how to communicate to understanding how to react to situations and collaborate with others. This class covers character motivations, scene work, audition skills, and the discipline required for ensemble productions, while building confidence and emphasizing emotional, physical, and vocal control while speaking before any audience.

Makerspace: Upper school students will use their creative skills to tackle real-world problems and enhance their literacy through activities like creating graphic novels, screenplays, and magazines.

Sustainability: Students discuss critical environmental issues and initiatives, including climate change, recycling, and more. They will collaborate on hands-on projects and activities, learning how to embrace a more sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Why Enrichment Matters

Students exposed to project-based learning often experience greater academic success and enhances creativity. They have the opportunity to develop essential skills such as collaboration, innovation and relationship building. At Pennfield, we are committed to providing students with education that goes beyond traditional classroom learning. The goal is to build a community of young thinkers, creators, and innovators who will shape the world for years to come.



Providing a Voice for All:



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Our Focus:

Building Community, Sharing Information,
Creating a Common Understanding,
and Fostering Global Citizenship



At the heart of Pennfield's mission is the belief that "everyone has the right to be treated with kindness and respect." Our DEIB committee members are dedicated to turning this belief into a thriving reality. Joy, understanding, and respect are the pillars of an inclusive and vibrant community, where members celebrate diversity, commonality, and individual uniqueness. This commitment extends beyond our campus as we strive to nurture a sense of belonging and prepare students to become engaged global citizens in their local and larger communities.

Building Community

We work towards being good community members and responsible global citizens. Recently, our Upper School student participated in Newport's first-ever Festival Latino organized by Conexión Latina Newport. They used their Spanish speaking skills to engage with the local community, creating art with children. We look forward to more opportunities to forge partnerships beyond our school community.

Weekly Classes

Pennfield is dedicated to providing students with a strong foundation in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Weekly classes for students in grades five through eight aim to equip students to think independently and work collaboratively, preparing them for a constantly evolving future. They're learning to navigate complex challenges with understanding and kindness, seeking answers to important global questions through real-world problem-solving.

Young Activists

This group adapts to the needs of our student community each year. Students passionate about diversity related issues have an opportunity to take an active role in society. Recent initiatives have included providing winter clothing for local and distant communities, collecting warm weather clothing to Haiti, and sending aid to Ukraine. The group's newest project is working in collaboration with the school's Green Team to grow a garden to provide vegetables to communities in need. This is made possible by a grant from the Military Spouses of Newport.

Community Conversations

Even during challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, we've maintained our commitment to fostering community and understanding. Community Conversations, previously held in person, transitioned to virtual platforms. These gatherings are open to parents, teachers, and all interested community members. Discussions cover a variety of topics, from faculty's professional development reading to thought provoking articles and research on diversity and inclusion. We aim to provide opportunities to share experiences, discuss current issues, learn from one another, and foster lasting friendships.



Art Gallery

Our mini-gallery near the Front Desk features rotating art exhibits, showcasing the works of diverse artists and a wide range of subject matter. Past installations celebrated women artists, women around the world, and highlighted the diversity of communities. We've featured artists from as far away as India as well as past parents and alumni. Exhibitions have included works by renowned photographers, sculptors, and painters.

This year began with artwork from the continents of Africa and Asia. We look forward to the next rotation of artwork, which will showcase watercolors by the late Susie Fields, a beloved former Upper School art teacher whose influence is felt by many of our alumni. Additionally, we anticipate an exciting new installation from renowned photographer Rick Guidotti, celebrating the beauty of human diversity.

Together, we are making strides towards creating an inclusive, vibrant community. We believe in the power of diversity and the strength of inclusion. Meaningful change requires sustained and intentional effort. We invite any current parent or alumni to join us on this journey of understanding, kindness, and respect for all.



Par for the Course: Generous Support

The 16th Annual Mark Bistline Golf Tournament and Toast on the Terrace on Monday, May 15, 2023 were both hugely successful! Rhode Island Country Club was the perfect setting, the weather was spectacular, and we raised over \$78,000. Thank you to all of our sponsors, golfers, and party-goers. We appreciate your support of The Pennfield School and look forward to seeing you hitting the links on Monday, May 13, 2024.



Message from the PSA President

As I begin my fourth year as the President of the PSA, it is my honor to update you on our organization's most recent accomplishments.

It is with immense pride that I reflect on the contributions and invaluable support of our school community that dedicates considerable amounts of their time to make the mission of the PSA a success. The PSA's primary focus is one of School Spirit and Morale-- we are charged with building and strengthening the Pennfield community through our programming.

Many of our flagship events have returned after a pandemic-induced hiatus, and it has been nothing short of magical to return to our traditional events schedule, while forging the way to create new traditions as well.

Through various initiatives, events, and fundraisers, we have not only raised funds for essential technology upgrades, but we have recently begun providing funding for the expansion of the school's Sustainability efforts as they establish a schoolwide composting program, and we continue to provide funding for the annual Arts Week in May, and various other programs throughout the year. All of our fundraising remains participatory, and is anchored by our largest fundraiser, the Hot Lunch program, as well as our Spirit Shop, a fundraising relationship with Minted.com, and the Clement's Receipt program.

It is a great honor and privilege to serve you as PSA President, and I look forward to another fantastic year ahead.

Anna Kane, P'29, P'32
PSA PRESIDENT 2020-2024

We want to hear from you!

Send your news and photos to:
alumninews@pennfield.org

Digital images should be 1MB or larger.



< Thanksgiving
Feast 2022

Pennfield's
50th Gala >



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Annual Giving Report

2023



The Pennfield Fund

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Leadership Gifts

Academic Patron \$3,000 – \$5,999

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Ray Keller
Peter and Janet Kent
Christian and Miriam Meko/
Booz Allen
Steven and Isla Pageau
Brewer and Abby Rowe
David and Kristin Wheeler

Head of School Circle \$750 – \$2,999

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Anne Nicole/
LinkedIn & Microsoft
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Souad Yarti
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Cote Architecture
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 Lucky Paws
 Jeff and Sara Dionne
 Hugo and Renee Dominguez
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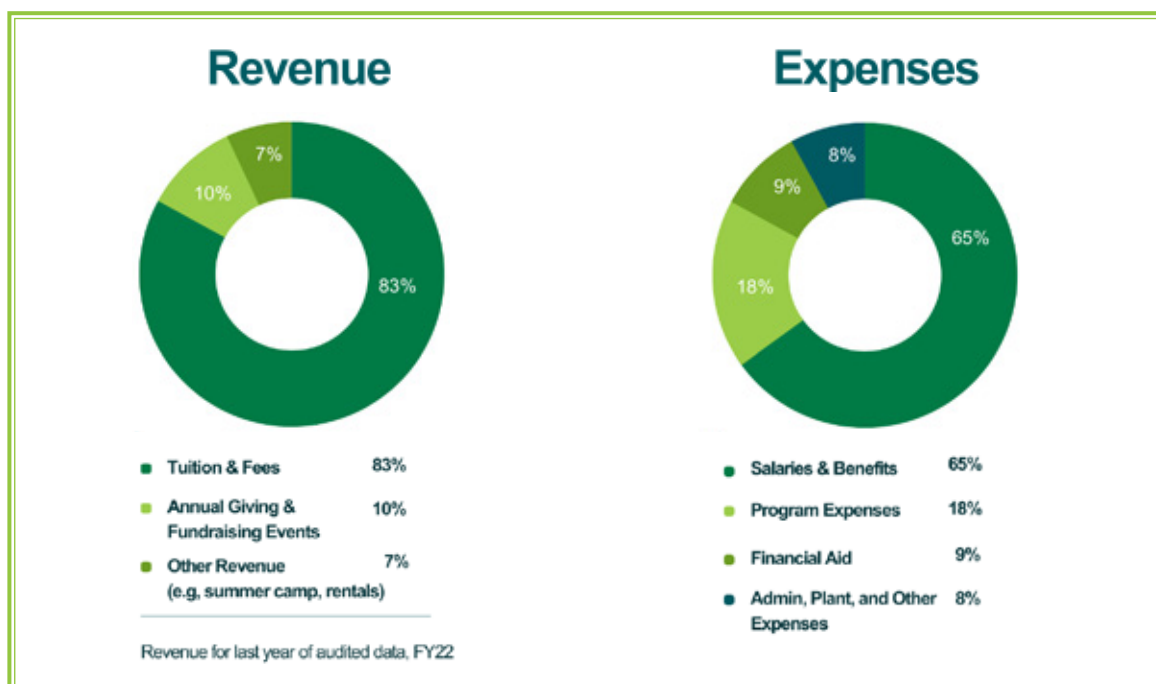
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