The Not-So-Silent Auction for Financial Aid Raises $24,000!

This year’s rather “loud” auction was our most successful ever! Perfect weather, more than 100 enthusiastic guests, delicious food in a delightful setting under a “big top” tent, donated items, and an entertaining comedian/auctioneer all came together in a wonderful event – thanks to the hard work of our auction committee and guests.

Many generous HGS families and friends donated a rich array of awesome auction items, ranging from the practical to very cool. Students and La Prima Catering interns Neil Sweeney, Cory Bassam, and Wayne Lewis helped plan the menu and prepare and present the food. Thank you, committee members, Margee Eife, Monica Rogers, Tracy Jones, Pam Lewis, Kim Peele, Kim Gillian, David Rarpy, Michele Schimp, Robin Washington, and staff Chad Thomas, Mary Rodihan, Maggie Szymanek, and Jeffrey Jarrett. Special thanks to Auction Committee Chair Regina Derzon, above, parent of Katya, ’12, Dave and Teresa Evans, alumni parents, owners of La Prima Catering, who provided the dinner and service for the second year; and Steve and Edie Skidmore, parents of Trish, ’13, owners of A&A Rentals, who gave us a great discount for the rental supplies.

Maymester

In May, High School students chose from a range of week-long workshops during the last three weeks of school that focused on a particular topic in art, science, literature, creative writing, history and the outdoors. Workshops included cooking, puppetry, building musical instruments, jam sessions, gender issues, creative writing and stage makeup. Thank you, guest teachers, Bill Blair and Amy Bergman.

Prom – HGS Style

Prom this year was held on the Nina’s Dandy, a luxury riverboat that included a delicious sit-down dinner, a live jazz band and a DJ. The boat took off with 60 gorgeous HGS kids and friends among its guest list. Everyone, including Nick and Trish, below, had a ball!

Graduating with Honors

Congratulations to Katya Derzon, above left, the class Valedictorian, and Christian Zepeda, above right, the class Salutatorian. Both Katya and Christian will attend Juniata College in PA, and both received merit scholarships.

HGS Student Places in History Day Competition

Last fall history buff and 8th grader Duncan Hoag, who investigated the effect of the influenza epidemic of 1918 on US history, earned First Place in the Northern Virginia area National History Day Competition. He went on to take First Place in the Regionals in Williamsburg, and proudly went on to Nationals on June 11. Congratulations, Duncan!

Graduation, May 31, 2012

The Howard Gardner School

The Howard Gardner School is a small, progressive independent school grades 6-12 for college-bound learners in Alexandria, Virginia, with a focus on environmental science and the arts. The school’s mission is to help bright, creative non-traditional learners use their unique strengths to thrive academically, intellectually and emotionally.

Hands-on learning through environmental science and the arts. Alexandria, VA 2011-12 Issue 6
Every year, the October issue of Washingtonian Magazine is devoted to independent schools. In 2011, HGS was honored as one of the top five schools in the Nurturing Communities category.

Middle School
HGS middle schoolers learned about the Reconstruction Period after the Civil War. The students created a series of memorable shorts videos about major occurrences, using what they learned in their lessons. The video depicting the assassination of President Lincoln, complete with a nerf gun as the murder weapon, is a classic!

Summer Camp at HGS
Last summer was our first summer camp at HGS, featuring Creative Explorations. Addie Helmkne, our Ecology teacher, offered two weeks of activities involving ecology, creative writing and yoga meditation. Campers had a great time exploring local eco systems, despite 100 degrees temperatures. They wrote stories, created videos and advertisements, and took part in yoga.

Bonding Week
Students spent the first week of school on a team-building project and attended orientation workshops. Middle Schoolers built two competing cardboard boats, and high schoolers were challenged to create “boats” that would stay afloat while holding a crew for a period of time – using cardboard, plastic and duct tape. The results were lessons learned, in addition to a lot of sweat, water and fun.

Ecology and Senior Environmental Studies
Students in our Ecology and Senior Environmental Science classes gathered data as citizen-scientists, and contributed the data to large-scale scientific efforts. They started by joining World Monitoring Day for a water-monitoring workshop, and sent the results of the water quality testing to be included in an international database. They also participated in a stream clean-up with Stewardship Virginia, and sent the data about trash in Pikes Branch, our adopted stream, to the Fairfax County Adopt-A-Stream program.

HGS Artists & Growing Panes
A team of HGS student artists, led by teacher Shelly Wittak and assisted by Internship Coordinator Hope Peele, created four art windows for the “Growing Panes: Windows to a Better Tomorrow” project sponsored by the City of Alexandria and artist Leisa Collins. Students worked after school to create their vision of basic human rights, and received awards from the City Council. The show was exhibited in City Hall.

Senior Projects
Seniors worked hard all year at HGS. In the first semester they wrapped up college-level classes and their final semester of high school classes. They had to complete a research paper in APA format, work together on a senior environmental science project, and make a formal presentation to a committee of their teachers, and presented Senior Projects that began in January. The range of the projects was astounding and impressive.

Annie Marie Bull, above, studied child development and will be certified to work in Early Childhood settings in the spring. Ben Jarvis, below left, traveled to Boston and interviewed Harvard professor Howard Gardner, below right, for a documentary on how multiple intelligences theory can be used in education. Students worked closely with their HGS mentors in a supportive study group. They detailed their progress online and presented the results of their projects to their families at a formal evening presentation in the spring.

Arts & Sciences Exhibition
Held in March, our seventh annual Arts & Sciences Exhibition was a celebration of the work students have done across the school year. They detailed their projects to families and we will miss her dearly. She is pursuing college-level classes and their final semester of high school classes. They had to complete a research paper in APA format, work together on a senior environmental science project, and make a formal presentation to a committee of their teachers, and presented Senior Projects that began in January. The range of the projects was astounding and impressive.

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From Our Head of School
Why Build Boats?
Each year during the final week of school, students participate in an activity that, so them, is about a boat race. It is, however, much more than that.

Students from all grades are divided into groups with the task of building a boat using only three materials – cardboard, plastic garbage bags and duct tape. Before they begin construction, Chad Thomas talks with them about buoyancy. During the week while their building, teachers serve as facilitators. The rest is left up to the students.

So why did they build boats? The first week of school is dedicated to helping students get to know each other and get reacquainted with classmates and their teachers. We call it Bonding Week. Through this lower school experience creative problem solving, teamwork, identifying a role for themselves within a group, how to work independently and a bit of physics.

Launching the boats is always an adventure – both to participate in and to witness. Kids cheer each other’s team on as they try to float their boat around a buoy and back to shore. A few make it, others don’t. In the end, they all have a great deal of fun while learning a few things along the way and becoming fast friends.

Katherine Keith

HGS Has Accepted as Candidate School for Accreditation
HGS has been enthusiastically accepted as a Candidate for Accreditation after an initial visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), under the umbrella organization, AdvancEd. While initial accreditation is usually a multi-year process, our external review will be held in the fall and we expect to be granted accreditation in the spring of 2012-2013. The true purpose of accreditation, which is not required in Virginia, is to embark on a continual cycle of reflection and improvement. We look forward to an enriching ongoing effort throughout the year.

2011-12 Faculty and Staff
Mary Rodihan, Office Manager and Admissions Director, came from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg. Rodihan has a B.A. in Social Work from James Madison University. Mary brought with her a great deal of experience in working with non-profits and is extremely organized and personable.

Mary and Erick have both been fabulous additions to an already amazing staff at HGS, and we welcome them both.

Board of Trustees
Katherine Keith, co-founder, president
Emily Pavot, co-founder
Reid Adler
Laurie Chester
Bob Kuletz
Kim Peele
Trey Williams
Maggie Szymanek, advisor

New Faculty and Staff
Erick Johnson joined HGS in fall as a teacher of English, with a M.Ed. in Secondary Education, from Marymount University. Erick is a talented teacher and a natural with the students, and had a great first year.

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Congrats, HGS Basketball Team!
HGS enjoyed a great game against The Nora School, a school of 60 students in Bethesda. With help from every member of the team, the lead switched back and forth, ending in a tie at the buzzer. HGS scored in overtime, winning 30 to 28. While a sweet victory, it was a great chance for HGS students to play basketball, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

Addie Helmke, Environmental Science
Erick Johnson, English
Katherine Keith, Co-founder, Director
Mary Rodihan, English
Learning Specialist
Hope Peele, Internship & Community Service Coordinator
Bryan Smith, Business Math, Algebra
Alex Stephenson-Castle, History, Zoology
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