

# The VOICE

*"Leadership and learning are Indispensable to each other." - John F. Kennedy*

## Finding A Deeper Shade of Green at TCS

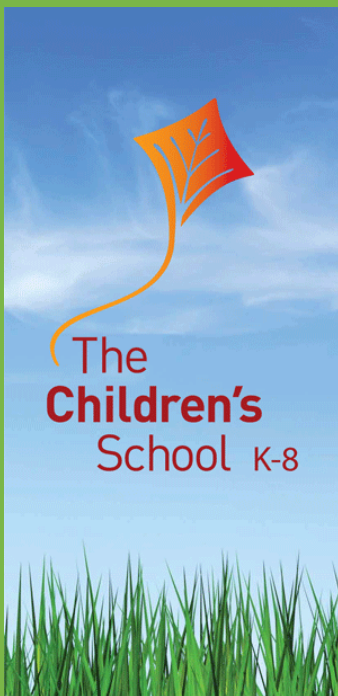
During the first year in our new facility, The Children's School took on the goal of reducing our environmental footprint. We knew that moving and renovating our new space would require us to purchase materials and implement new processes for waste disposal. We took advantage of the new start and collaborated on ways to increase our commitment to zero waste, recycling and using more recycled and environmentally friendly materials in our programs, furnishings, and facility.

"Environmental awareness and action have always been part of our organizational philosophy and goals," says Ms. Christina Martin, director of curriculum and instruction. "Fortunately it's part of our community consciousness in that we keep each other mindful of environmental impacts whenever we embark on new activities or make new purchases."

"One of the focal points of our progressive education program is also social justice. As students learn about social justice concepts and the distribution of resources in a community, concern for the environment frequently forms the bedrock of class project topics. Additionally, we look for ways to incorporate environmental issues into existing projects that may not have an overt connection to environmental studies. Below are a few ways we as a school community are moving toward producing less waste and fostering learning and a sense of stewardship for the environment in our students:



Sixth-graders help out in our "Adopt-a-Block" effort



The  
Children's  
School K-8

*An independent  
not-for-profit K-8  
school that embraces  
progressive education.*

### Composting

TCS partnered with Seven Generations Ahead to add composting to our school recycling program and make compost bins available in classrooms. In addition, our Kindergarten vermiculture bin continues to provide a first hand experience in composting for younger children.

### Zero Waste Initiative

We've worked hard to reduce waste in our classrooms through increasing our use of reusable craft, snack or lunch containers, using compostable plates and utensils for events, and asking people to bring water bottles. We reuse whatever we can, whenever we can.

### Adopt-a-Block

TCS joined the Village of Oak Park's "Adopt-a-Block" program, agreeing to clean up the 300 block of South Oak Park Avenue on a monthly basis. If you or your family would like to volunteer in cleaning up for one month, let us know! It takes about 30 minutes.

### Forest Preserve Stewardship

Often, on our many field trips to the woods, classes participate in stewardship work by helping pull invasive weeds, clearing debris, and picking up trash. The tasks are explained by Forest Preserve staff and offer kids a chance to both contribute and learn more about the natural environment.

### Nature Play - Edible Garden

In addition to using organic and/or recycled material whenever possible in our outdoor play space, we've also planted an edible garden thanks to the award of a raised garden bed from the Deep Roots Project. Students grew seedlings and helped plant them for our first growing season.

200 S. Oak Park Ave., Oak Park, IL 60302, (708)484-8033, [www.TheChildrensSchool.info](http://www.TheChildrensSchool.info)

# The Children's School's "Crystal Ball" a Success!

Everyone had a roaring good time at the 1920's themed 2019 Annual Benefit, the Crystal Ball. Thanks to the generosity of so many participants and donors, The Children's School raised \$31,000, to help bridge the gap between what our tuition rates cover and the total cost of our programs. Held at historic Unity Temple in Oak Park, this year's benefit offered several "firsts" including online bidding for our silent auction items, which was a great success.

The contribution of hard work and resources from so many volunteers made this year's benefit the "Bee's Knees." Our thanks go out especially to the benefit planning team lead by Becky and John Fuller, including Christine Horowitz, Noola Laguardia, Meredith McGuire, Sonia Johansen, Souixzi Donnelly, Kate Sjostrom. Thanks to the many others who donated items, donated time for set-up and take down, and attended the event in support of a fun and eventful night.



# 2019 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

## Great Things Parents Are Saying about The Children's School

For the last several years, TCS has offered two surveys -- one for current parents, and one for alumni parents -- to gain perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of our program. We receive lots of great information that has helped us improve aspects of our academic curriculum, high school transition preparation, and the socio-emotional support we offer our students. THANK YOU to everyone who participates in these surveys! They only take a few minutes, but they really make a difference.

We just couldn't resist sharing some of the wonderful praises and insights from this year's surveys:

### What did TCS do Particularly Well to Prepare Your TCS Grad for Academic Success?

"The love of learning. Research and problem-solving skills. Figuring out HOW to arrive at the answer to the problem rather than simply getting the correct answer. Asking 'Why.'"

"TCS helped her to be confident in speaking up for herself, sharing her ideas, and taking risks in an academic setting. She is eager to share what she thinks and not afraid of making mistakes."

"Independent and critical thinking."

"Honed critical thinking skills."

### What did TCS do Particularly Well to Prepare Your TCS Grad for the Social/Emotional adjustments of school or work after TCS?

"She is able to reach out to other people and seems confident that they will find her interesting and likable. She has a solid sense of who she is and she values herself, which helps her withstand the ups and downs of adolescent life."

"Problem solving with peers and adults. Learned how to talk to adults. Lots of tolerance for all kinds of kids."

"Remaining true to herself. Maintaining high moral standards and treating others with respect and fairness."

"Built his confidence and gave him practice with group work and negotiation."

"Great self-confidence and self-advocating."

## Reflections From Our Current Parents

"The focus on social and emotional skills and the way project work taps into the children's strength is much appreciated. We see growth for our children in their confidence, social skills, and understanding of diversity and equity. Thank you!"

"I want to add my appreciation for the outdoor space and the learning philosophy associated with it. It has had a dramatic impact on our child. She is more willing to take physical and emotional risks as a result."

"We love TCS. Our children thrive there and love to learn. The school guides children to become better through appropriate challenges, and also become thoughtful learners and empathetic people."



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2019 TCS GRADUATES!

Eighth grade is a special year at The Children's School. Our oldest students are busy, not only with regular classroom lessons, projects, and field trips, but also with considerations of where they will go to high school and how they will make that transition.

## Eighth Grade Capstone Projects

In addition to class group projects, each eighth-grader completes their own "Capstone Project," which is a major undertaking of planning, research, and execution on a topic of their choice. The Capstone process requires each student to create a website about their project, meet with both their teacher and an adult mentor at regular intervals, and keep a blog as their project plans unfold. The final step



The TCS graduating class of 2019 chose rainbow-themed cap and mortar in their group commitment to the value of accepting every individual's uniqueness.

includes a presentation to a review panel of adults, which can include faculty, board members, and TCS parents.

The Capstone Projects from the class of 2019 included:

- Raising money for an orphanage in Guatemala
- Environmentally sustainable design and how humans are impacting the environment
- A book presenting an alternate version of the Revolutionary War
- Creation of a school newspaper
- A written guide to neurodiversity
- A documentary comparing the personality and temperament of an 8th grade teacher and a kindergarten teacher
- A bug snack stand promoting eating insects



Traditional passing of the suitcase -- full of 8th graders' advice for next incoming class on how to survive 8th grade.

## What Our Grads Appreciate About Project-Based Learning

In a graduation questionnaire, we asked each student a bit about their favorite projects in their time at TCS. Not surprisingly, 5 of our grads said

their Capstone Project was their favorite. "I really enjoyed my Capstone Project. It was nice to take that time to myself and learn about who and what I can be." says Samantha Bishop.

"My favorite project was my Capstone, because I found a project I felt passionate about," says Max Friedman.

"My dragon project was the best ... I never got the chance to do projects at my former school."

"I took a lot away from my experiences and projects at TCS," says grad Lyd Krasuski. "Not just with projects I completed, but through socializing with other students, which could be considered a project on its own."

## Graduation: Honoring Each Grad's Impact on TCS

Finishing a Capstone Project is a milestone that makes a TCS graduation so special. However, the biggest reason our graduation is so meaningful is that our programs and small class sizes mean that virtually the *entire* faculty and staff know each grad and have watched their progress -- in some cases, since Kindergarten.

At our ceremony, each graduate is honored by a faculty member who reads his or her own reflection on that grad's academic career. Usually, this personal touch by the faculty is alternately sentimental, funny, encouraging, and full of meaningful, positive anecdotes about the student's learning journey as seen from a teacher's eye.

Now that we are enjoying our 15 year anniversary, our very first graduates are in college and moving onto their career years. We love hearing about their accomplishments and thoughts on their time at TCS, and celebrating their continued learning and success. We look forward to watching our 2019 group in their continuing education and life journeys, and wish them all the best!

Below, we are proud to introduce our class of 2019 and where they are attending high school. We know they will do well as they continue their journey as lifelong learners!

## The Children's School Class of 2019

### Ainsley Sedivy

Avalon School, St. Paul, MN

### Anna Breit

Riverside Brookfield High School

### Claire Rosewarne-Friday

Riverside Brookfield High School

### Lyd Krasuski-Cortese

GCE Lab School

### Max Friedman

Oak Park River Forest High School

### Samantha Bishop

St. Joseph High School, Westchester

### Wil Vollentine

Oak Park River Forest High School

# Thanks to Everyone for a Truly Amazing Year!

The past year was nothing short of amazing, as we moved our school from Berwyn to Oak Park. We couldn't have done it, nor had such a successful year in our new facility, without the contribution of time and talents from our entire TCS community. We want to take this page to express our gratitude. **If you ever...**

- Volunteered weekly for recess duty or in the library
- Set up or put away chairs at a special event
- Carpooled
- Brought in crickets or otherwise cared for a classroom pet
- Worked in, or donated items for, our outdoor space
- Were a "buddy family"
- Served on a Capstone committee or as a Capstone advisor
- Supported Capstone projects by buying items like insect cookies, coffee, or artwork
- Helped organize or staff graduation
- Loaded or unloaded a moving box
- Volunteered in a classroom or chaperoned a field trip
- Made yourself available to talk with a prospective family
- Referred someone to TCS for a tour
- Came in to talk to a class about your job/hobby/research/history
- Contributed snacks or refreshments for an event
- Helped with Teacher Appreciation Week
- Fixed or installed anything in our new building
- Made a donation to the year-end appeal
- Attended and/or donated to our annual benefit
- Supported your child as they worked through a conflict with another child
- Scoped-out, measured, or installed new bike racks
- Transcribed stories for a teacher
- Organized or participated in a dinner fundraiser at a local restaurant
- Designed, ordered, or wore spirit wear
- Attended Parent Orientation, Curriculum Night and other parent information activities
- Participated in parent-teacher conferences
- Served on the Board of Directors or one of our working committees
- Fostered curiosity and wonder in your child through library or museum trips, hikes, board games, etc.
- Talked to your child about what they were learning in school
- Helped us implement our compost and recycling initiatives
- Referred someone to TCS so they could make a donation
- Researched whether your company could make a matching donation to TCS
- Made sure your student had indoor shoes each day
- Read all of our newsletters and emails (or at least most of them!)
- Encouraged your student to get a good night's rest for school the next day.
- Subscribed or followed us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube

**All of Us at  
The Children's School  
THANK YOU!**



## Welcome New 2019 - 2020 Board Members



This spring, our TCS board welcomed four new members. **Sonia Johansen** (*top photo*) is our new board secretary, and also a TCS parent. Her background in architecture, design, and education has already served TCS well.



We also welcome our new member-at-large, TCS parent **Ahmed Dola** (*second photo*). Dola has been active for several years, contributing his knowledge in the classroom and as a volunteer at several TCS events.



The board is also fortunate to have **Alison Hafner** (*third photo*) serving as its alumni member-at-large. Alison brings years of experience and a historical perspective as a parent of two grads who are now in college.



We also have a new faculty representative in seventh grade teacher **Melissa Barone** (*fourth photo*). Ms. Barone just completed her second year of teaching at TCS. She follows **Dana Nasralla** who served as faculty representative to the board in 2018-2019.

**Kate Sjostrom** will continue to serve as our board president, and **Andy Curtis** will remain as treasurer, while **Becky Fuller** has stepped into the Vice President post. **Scott Bellner** and **Julia Huff** remain on the board as members-at-large, while **Christina Martin** also remains on the board in her role as director of curriculum and instruction.

### Gratitude for a Job Well Done!

We also extend our deepest thanks to **Heather Vickery** who is stepping down from the board after several year of spectacular service in a variety of roles, including president. We also thank **Susie Donohue**, who is stepping down as our Alumni member-at-large, where she was instrumental in launching several alumni outreach initiatives. We've also granted new titles to two amazing TCS leaders: **BJ Richards**, is now our first Honorary Board Member. Our founder, **Daniel P. Ryan, Ed.D.**, is now Board Member Emeritus.

All of the members above, both incoming and outgoing, did an outstanding job in a challenging year. Our move to the new location, and the first year in a new facility, required a great deal of consulting, resourcefulness, elbow-grease, and time from our board. With their talents, hard work, and passion, they've brought TCS to the end of a successful transition and hold a great collective vision for our future!

For more information on each event, please visit the event calendar on our website or call 708-484-8033.

**AUGUST 27TH** 7-8:30 PM

PARENT ORIENTATION

**AUGUST 28TH** 9-11:00 AM

STUDENT OPEN HOUSE

**SEPTEMBER 2ND** LABOR DAY

**SEPTEMBER 3RD** 8:45-11:30 AM

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL - early dismissal

**SEPTEMBER 4TH**

BEFORE CARE and KID's PROJECT Starts

**SEPTEMBER 6TH** 9-11:00 AM

FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE TOUR

**SEPTEMBER 18TH** 7-8:30PM

CURRICULUM NIGHT

**OCTOBER 4TH**

NO SCHOOL - Institute Day

**OCTOBER 11TH** 9-11:00 AM

FIRST FRIDAY OPEN HOUSE TOUR

**OCTOBER 14TH** 9-11:00 AM

COLUMBUS DAY - SCHOOL OPEN!



## We did it! One year in our new space, and...

...we discovered that we love it! It exceeds our hopes in terms of allowing us more flexibility in our program activities, and in providing a gymnasium that allows our entire student population to join together for group gatherings and events. We had worried that the outdoor courtyard would be a limitation, but instead, we've turned it into an asset through the construction of our Riverside themed nature-play area. Everyone senses that our visibility in the community at large has expanded. Tours and enrollment numbers are up from last year, and we've been able to host several successful family fun events onsite. Our location facilitated many mini-field trips around town, and easy access to Chicago. Like any maiden voyage, we've had our share of puzzles to solve, including shoring up heating, cooling, and internet service, along with adapting to the idiosyncrasies of the building. What we do know is that it was an incredible year where so much hard work by our entire community really paid off! Thank you, everyone, for all you've done to make this relocation a success!

## The VOICE

**Welcome** to our newsletter from The Children's School. Here we share stories, photos, interviews, and feature articles highlighting our student's work, faculty, school activities, and other news that gives readers a better understanding of progressive education and our school community. If you would like more information or have comments, please call 708-484-8033 or email us at [thevoice@thechildrenschool.info](mailto:thevoice@thechildrenschool.info), and be sure to visit us online at [www.thechildrenschool.info](http://www.thechildrenschool.info).