

The Blue Doors

The
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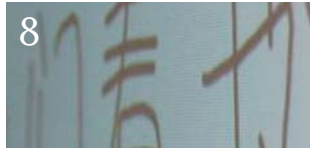
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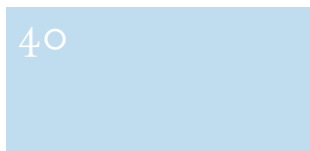


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Head of School Dorothy A. Hutcheson and History Department Head Heidi Kasevich pictured with 11 juniors and seniors in front of a Hindu temple in Dharamsala on Nightingale's first-ever trip to India. Read more on page 11.

Foreword

Late August is always energizing for me, full of time to anticipate the new school year and to reflect on the year just ended. One of my favorite highlights from 2008–2009 was traveling with juniors and seniors in our World Religions class to India over spring break, exploring sites that are sacred to Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Seeing worshipers prostrate themselves at the palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, listening to our students' stories of their homestays with Tibetan families in exile, and witnessing hundreds of joyful people walking for miles on hot, overcrowded roads to make a pilgrimage to a Hindu temple were just a few of the indelible memories.

It wasn't just India, of course. Spring was a terrific time to be at Nightingale, as the varsity lacrosse team brought home its first AAIS championship, a group of eighth graders and two science teachers returned from an inaugural field study trip to Costa Rica, and English teacher Christine Schutt was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her novel *All Souls*, set in an all-girls' school in Manhattan. We also celebrated the distinguished careers of Nancy Kingson and Diana Frangos, two remarkable educators who made an enormous impact on generations of students in their thirty-plus years at Nightingale.

And right at the tail end of the year, we received more positive news: despite the economic uncertainties of the past twelve months, our community came together to raise an incredible amount of money for scholarships and operating funds. In fact, 38% of our alumnae contributed to the Alumnae Fund, the highest rate ever for Nightingale! Parents also stepped forward to give generously, with many classes hitting 100% participation. Senior class parents raised special funds to expand technology and to supplement our financial aid budget, especially for families hard hit by the financial crisis. In the back of this magazine, you'll find the Annual Report that details these triumphs. The generosity of every member of our community never fails to impress and amaze me—thank you for supporting our girls!

These are the stories that float through the hallways as a new school year begins. This time around, however, I'm also sensing increased excitement for the upcoming year—big things are happening around Nightingale, and we're as focused on the future as we've ever been. In fact, we're tackling so many exciting things that we'll be sending out a special publication in the coming weeks that highlights the strength and innovation of our 90-year-old institution.

Perhaps that's the most exciting part: we will be celebrating Nightingale's 90th Anniversary in 2010! We'll have more details for you as we finalize plans for spring and fall 2010, and we hope that you'll be a part of the celebration.

There's a lot of work to do this year as we create new programs and build on the successes of those who have come before us. I can't imagine a better group of students, trustees, faculty, staff, alumnae, and parents to tackle the future together and am eager to dive into the fall. See you around the blue doors.

Warmly,

Dorothy A. Hutcheson
Head of School

A Whale

and a Tale

Elaine Williamson's Lower School science class combines art, writing, and story-telling skills to bring sea animals to life

by Mark Donovan P'17

Richard Ellis is running out of time. With the 40-minute period drawing to a close, the noted marine biologist and artist is instructing Elaine Williamson's Class III science class on how to draw a blue whale. And who is better qualified to do so than Ellis, designer of the mammoth blue whale that hangs in the Great Hall at the American Museum of Natural History? "The blue whale," proclaims Ellis, "has the biggest mouth in the world." To give a sense of scale, he quickly sketches an SUV next to the whale. The SUV is dwarfed by the massive mouth. The girls are listening intently and sketching madly as the bell rings. They are expected back in their homeroom for recess where a birthday party awaits, but the students linger to put the finishing touches on their blue whales. "Can we keep doing this instead of recess?" asks one. "This is much better than a party."

The sketching is a recent addition to Mrs. Williamson's marine biology unit, which she has been teaching to third graders for close to 25 years. A few years back, Mrs. Williamson decided to add a study of marine mammals to the curriculum. Since marine mammals are notoriously reluctant to be brought into the classroom, hands-on activities were out. So Mrs. Williamson settled on a book-based research project instead.

At that point, Mrs. Williamson recruited Lower School Librarian Lois Strell and me, in my role as Lower School Writing Consultant, to help shape the new unit. Together, we devised a series of activities designed to give the girls a chance to hone their research abilities, sharpen their writing



skills, and expand their knowledge of marine mammals. Each student is assigned a different marine mammal—say, the sea otter or the Amazon River dolphin—and, over the course of nine or 10 classes, each girl will become the resident expert—and expert artist—on her particular marine mammal.

The project opens with an introductory lesson, taught by Ms. Strell, focusing on techniques that will help lay a strong foundation for future research projects. Ms. Strell begins by asking the students, "What do you already know about marine mammals, and what would you like to know?" Utilizing a SmartBoard, Ms. Strell records their responses under four different subject headings—Physical Description, Habitat, Food, and Enemies.

Ms. Strell instructs the girls on how to use an index and a table of contents, what to look for and how to take notes.



At left, a right whale as imagined by Samantha Littenberg '18; above, "The Life of an Orca" by Kaitlin Hui '18

The girls spend two classes taking notes as they pore over the books that Mrs. Williamson and Ms. Strell have gathered. To flesh out their notes, the girls do online research in the computer room.

Now the students are ready to write—well, almost. First comes a class discussion on how many paragraphs their reports should be, what might constitute a good topic sentence, and possible stylistic approaches. Some girls start each paragraph with a question ("Do you know what manatees like to eat?"), while others opt for the first person ("My name is Sally. I am a sperm whale..."). When they have completed a first draft, the students confer with either Mrs. Williamson or me to go over their work. They then revise and edit as needed. Once the research paper is completed, the girls are given a chance to incorporate their newfound knowledge into a short piece of fiction in which their particular marine mammal encounters one of its enemies and figures out how to survive.

To complement the written part of the project, Mrs. Williamson enlisted the aid of longtime friend Richard Ellis. The author and illustrator of dozens of books, Ellis generously volunteers his time to conduct a mini-seminar on how to draw marine mammals, sharing anecdotes on the various species all the while. By the end of his visit, even an inept adult artist like me can produce a sketch of an orca that actually resembles an orca. Calling on techniques described by Ellis,

each girl executes a detailed drawing of her marine mammal with colored pencils. This drawing serves as the cover for the finished report.

A truly cross-curricular learning experience, the marine mammal unit gives Class III students a chance to build library skills, practice research techniques, write both prose and fiction, show off their artistic talents, and demonstrate their knowledge of marine mammals.

I have learned almost as much as the girls. Now I know why right whales are called right whales. (They were considered the "right" whales to hunt because they are rich in blubber, easy to catch, and float after being killed.) I also learned that, unlike grizzlies or brown bears, polar bears are marine mammals and that unlovely manatees were once thought to be mermaids. And while I am

still a little fuzzy on the difference between a seal and a sea lion, the girls (and Mrs. Williamson) are always around to set me straight.

The final class is the girls' favorite—the publishing party. Each student reads an excerpt from her research paper or short story. The other girls are always a perfect audience, quiet to a fault. This respectful silence is no doubt a reflection of their fascination with the subject matter, but it may also be related to the fact that they are happily chomping on the donut holes that we bring in to mark the occasion.

Can we keep doing this instead of recess? asks one. This is much better than a party.

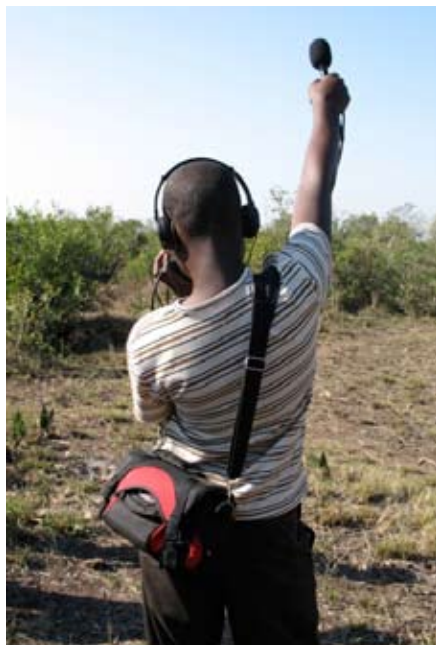
Out of Africa

Former parent Beth Sachs and Pam Michaelcheck P'11 helped spearhead the new Children's Radio Foundation, which just broadcast its first show on South African public radio

by Joanne Fowler P'20

In 2005, within a matter of weeks, Beth Sachs had two experiences that would have a profound impact on her life. While standing in her Bedford, NY, kitchen one evening, she glanced at a CNN documentary on the TV about life under the Taliban and was stunned to see how deeply traumatized three little Afghan girls had become after watching their mother being brutally attacked and killed. "Where is the voice of love and caring for these girls?" Sachs, a clinically trained psychologist, recalls wondering. Then weeks later, while attending a United Nations dinner, she heard a beautiful 26-year-old African woman share a heart-breaking tale of how she unwittingly became infected with HIV by her husband. "Rather than hide in shame, the woman bravely shared her story on Zambian radio, encouraging infected listeners to seek out available medication. One elderly villager was so touched, she walked 100 miles to meet the woman in person. "Gosh, the power of radio is so strong," Sachs (mother of former student Hadley Sachs '11) recalls thinking. "I had an epiphany right there. Why not

create a children's radio network to reach out to those kids without parents—without hope and without joy?"



planning, the newly christened Children's Radio Foundation (CRF) broadcast its first show on South African public radio and has provided high-quality programming throughout the country

Over the next few months, the dedicated philanthropist quietly set out to make her vision a reality. Inspired by the success of the Greening of Detroit reforestation project she launched two decades earlier, Sachs began doing research and discovered a dearth of children's radio programming in Africa, particularly for kids age nine to 14. She shared her idea with contacts at NPR, the United Nations, and with members of the Nightingale community such as Pam Michaelcheck, whose daughter, Charlotte '11, is best friends with Beth's daughter. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. "Beth asked me, 'What do you think?' And I basically said, 'I am in,'" recalls Michaelcheck, a veteran fund-raiser who immediately set out to bring the project to fruition. In April, after nearly four years of



Kids involved with Children's Radio Foundation learn all aspects of producing a radio show, including recording environmental noises.



every Saturday at noon ever since. In just a few months, the show has attracted between 200,000 and 300,000 listeners around the country and continues to build a growing audience. "Radio allows exposure to many, many things," says Sachs. "Our goal is to shine the spotlight on heroes, entrepreneurs, scientists, and any other people who are approaching problems such as global warming or child protection."

Under the leadership of veteran South African journalist Sue Valentine, the foundation produces a wide-ranging weekly broadcast with segments touching upon everything from current affairs to education to entertainment. During a recent broadcast, listeners were treated to an interview with a Brazilian dance troupe offering classes to youth in Cape Town and a former gang member's first-person account of how he turned his life around with guidance from a caring aunt. And in a particularly moving segment, a seven-year-old boy opened up about the treatment he's received at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town, ever since he was badly burned in 2008. In addition to sharing his own experiences, he interviewed his mother for her perspective on the tragic accident.

"These radio recordings have made a huge difference to the children," says CRF Executive Director Valentine. "Enabling children to tell their own stories not only affirms their view of the world, but it gives adults a glimpse of the world from a child's perspective."

In keeping with the mission to honor the lives of children, CRF is training kids in Cape Town aged 10 to 14 to work as radio reporters—teaching them interview techniques and how to handle the recording equipment. The foundation also runs a three-day workshop in a remote, rural Zulu section of the country, near the Mozambique border, where the children's work is broadcast on community radio every month. Refresher courses are offered to the children six months later.

"Hopefully we are creating a new generation of journalists," says Sachs.

Due to the current economic climate, finding funding to expand the project remains one of the biggest challenges for Sachs and her team. Thus far CRF's budget of less than \$1 million has come from grants and individual donors, but Sachs plans to tap into other sources in the future. She has also been in talks with various departments at UNICEF to replicate the program in other developing countries and ideally would love to broadcast programs in resettlement camps in Africa, where the lives of children and their families

completely lack structure. "Can you imagine if we set up a solar-powered radio tower and could provide stories and games for these kids," says Sachs, who communicates with her Cape Town-based staff of three several times a week through phone calls and Skype. "It would not only provide structure but could be very beneficial to people in those areas."

Both Beth Sachs and Pam Michaelcheck realize that some of their plans are still years away. But for now, they're thrilled that their radio program is up and

running, engaging kids halfway around the globe with new ideas and inspiring them to think big for their own lives. "We are so blessed to have our daughters at such an enriched environment as Nightingale with access to everything," says Sachs. "But when you contrast that with children in the developing world, radio is a great leveler. You don't have to be literate. All you have to do is turn the radio on and have this window into another world." Adds Michaelcheck, a long-time champion of children's causes and chairman of the board for the Southampton Fresh Air Home: "For me, it's always been about the children. It's about giving these kids a voice."

Radio is a great leveler. You don't have to be literate. All you have to do is turn the radio on and you have this window into another world.

For more information on the Children's Radio Foundation, visit www.childrenradiofoundation.org

Mandarin

With new faculty member Grace Wang, Nightingale's year-old Mandarin program is already flourishing

by Karyn Feiden

When Diana Ingerman got her first Mandarin textbook in Class IX, her friend Kate opened it, pointed to a long passage, and declared, "You won't be able to read this by the end of the year."

The bet was set, but midway through the class, Diana declared victory. "I felt really accomplished," she said. "When you don't know the language, it seems so foreign. It's really cool to be able to actually understand and read characters."

Many more Nightingale girls can now have that "cool" experience. Ten girls in Class IX signed up for the school's first-ever Mandarin course in September 2008, and most plan to continue their studies. Twelve others in Class IX and six in Class V will enter the world of Mandarin characters and tones for the first time this fall. Eventually, Nightingale expects to offer four years of Upper School study, culminating in a senior year Advanced Placement course.

WHY MANDARIN?

The decision to teach Mandarin reflects, in part, the school's increasing commitment to global awareness. The Nightingale graduate of 2017, according to the vision statement, will need "to be more aware of her place in the world, embracing global diversity and aiming to work across barriers, whether of ideology, language, culture, or faith."

Fluency in modern languages is an essential tool for building that awareness, and the school's horizons increasingly extend beyond Europe. "Every generation rethinks what a

liberal education should include," says Kitty Gordan, associate head of school. "Historically, liberal education has been rooted in a Western cultural tradition, but we live in a smaller world now and our students need to be exposed to different cultures and languages."

Faculty and staff spent more than a year in deliberative discussions about which modern language to add to Nightingale's already extensive roster of French and Spanish courses. Arabic, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian were all considered, but Mandarin ultimately won the day. Consultant Krista A. Forsgren, assistant director of the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program at the Woodrow Wilson School for International and Public Affairs, helped guide some of the school's thinking.

"The importance of China speaks for itself," says Kitty Gordan. "The world in which our students will live is one where China, Chinese culture, and Chinese values will be more prominent. We want to give our girls an early learning start."

That makes Nightingale something of a pioneer. In a 2005 report, the Asia Society noted that only 24,000 students, grades 7-12, were studying a Chinese language, compared to one million who were studying French. While those numbers may have shifted somewhat in recent years, a shortage of qualified teachers, as well as resource challenges, remain barriers at many schools.

Not everyone is lucky enough to find a Grace Wang.



Mandarin teacher Grace Wang instructs her Class IX students this spring.

BRINGING THE CLASSROOM ALIVE

Grace Wang came to the United States five years ago to pursue a master's degree at New York University, after completing a BA in her native Taiwan. Since then, she has worked with immigrants in Chinatown; college students on the Upper East Side; and Manhattan lawyers, bankers, and business people who need Mandarin to meet professional commitments. After interviewing some 50 candidates for the position of Chinese teacher at Nightingale, it was apparent to Samuel Howell, head of the Modern Languages Department, that Ms. Wang was right for the job.

Teaching Americans to write characters by making the proper strokes, in the proper sequence, and to speak a language that uses four contrasting tones to convey meaning requires patience, skill, and persistence. "At the beginning, students are timid because they have not seen something like characters before," says Ms. Wang. "But then they usually learn to love it."

Memorizing vocabulary and taking frequent quizzes are part of the learning process. "You learn by doing in foreign languages," she explains. "Quizzes help students produce

the language they have learned, instead of just receiving the information."

They also create dialogue, stage conversations in front of the class, and practice writing characters on the board. Over time, their strokes become more confident, their grammar

more sure. "Grace is very interactive," says Mr. Howell. "You can't just take notes and hide in a class like this. You will be called on directly."

Mandarin is not a conjugated language, and it does not use the declensions that in most European languages indicate gender, case, or the distinction between singular and plural. Meanings change in part by the proximity of one character to another; and the location of question words, like "what," "when," and "where," often holds the key to comprehension.

All of this can be puzzling, but some students discover that Mandarin is more suitable to their learning styles than Western languages. "It's a different way of thinking," says Mr. Howell. "For students who find Western languages or Latin difficult, this can be quite freeing. They may find in Mandarin a language that suits their differences."

THE FLAVOR OF CHINESE CULTURE

With Chinese integrated into the curriculum, Nightingale

The importance of China speaks for itself. The world in which our students live is one where China, Chinese culture, and Chinese values will be more prominent.

students are gaining exposure not only to the language, but to the rich cuisine, history, and traditions of the world's most populous nation. Last year, that meant eating mooncakes during a harvest celebration, ringing in the New Year with a Chinese feast, and visiting Ming Dynasty artifacts at the Met.

This past spring, Class IX students traveled to Chinatown and visited places even native New Yorkers seldom see—including an authentic dim sum palace where they ordered in Mandarin, a local ice cream factory where red bean ice cream is made, and a mall where Chinese teenagers gather after school. Ms. Wang has also reached out to the broader



Nightingale community. During the school day, she might visit a math class to teach students the characters representing one through 10, a history class to talk about her grandmother's experience with foot binding, and an art class to demonstrate calligraphy. And at the after-school Hobby Horse program, she has introduced Kindergarten through Class IV students to Chinese songs and crafts.

All of that is designed to season Nightingale with the flavor of China. "Chinese isn't offered at every school," says Diana Ingerman, whose appetite has clearly been whetted. "It is so different from everything else we do. It's really awesome, and really interesting."

China in the Lower School

Our new Mandarin classes build upon the work of Class III homeroom teacher Laurie Hallen, who has been introducing her students to China since 2000. As her class ends their study of medieval Europe, they follow Marco Polo along the silk road and are introduced—as were the Europeans of that time—to the wonders of medieval China. The girls learn about Chinese inventions that were far ahead of European science, as well as the court of Kublai Khan, who was promoting religious diversity while Europe was mired in the Inquisition. They study scroll paintings, Ming vases, and a host of other Chinese art forms through the Visual Education Program, visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Rubin Museum in addition to classroom work. Geography is

a major focus throughout: tracking Marco Polo's travels, the girls place China in a global context, while studying climate and regional geography helps explain everything from lifestyles to farming techniques.

Class III students are also beginning to understand comparisons by this point in the year, and they train these new analytic skills on their studies of China; for instance, exploring the differences between rural villagers and urbanites. This spring, Mrs. Hallen and fellow homeroom teacher Claire Anderson '95 added another point of comparison as they introduced a new unit on modern China. Using their studies of ancient China as a foundation, the girls learned about contemporary artists like Zhang Hongtu, Mongolian

nomads in current society, and even appreciated the new architecture that came with last summer's Olympic Games. "The Olympics have done a lot to bring China to the forefront," says Mrs. Hallen.

Grace Wang also teaches the girls about Mandarin, its different tones, the importance of stroke order in writing, and how to read and write numbers. The girls even study Chinese music at this time with Deadra Hart, one of our Lower School music teachers. The point, says Mrs. Hallen, is that this is not just social studies—they approach China from every angle: art, language, math, history. With these opportunities to study China, our students are more able than ever to appreciate the history and beauty of this country.

Beyond the Blue Doors

Nightingale students have long used the world as their classroom, and this year they've expanded their reach even further. Over spring break, science teachers Nikki Vivion and Charlotte Jennings took a group of advanced science students on a field expedition in Costa Rica, while Head of the History Department Heidi Kasevich took her World Religions class on a week-long pilgrimage to India. On the next few pages, we present a sampling of photos and student reactions to these trips.



Costa Rica

Traveling to Costa Rica was an amazing experience and so much fun. Before we went, we learned so much about Costa Rican culture, history, and life. We conducted research and also had weekly group meetings. Over the summer we read two books: *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate* and *Costa Rica, a guide book*. *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate* told us about Costa Rica through the eyes of a scientist, giving us a completely different look at the country than what we learned in the guide book. Our meetings with Mr. Howell, Mr. Spalding, Ms. Jennings, and Ms. Vivion included presentations to further our knowledge of Costa Rica. Whether they were giving us Spanish lessons, culture lessons, or lectures on biodiversity and geology, all were interesting.

—Samantha Fleming '13

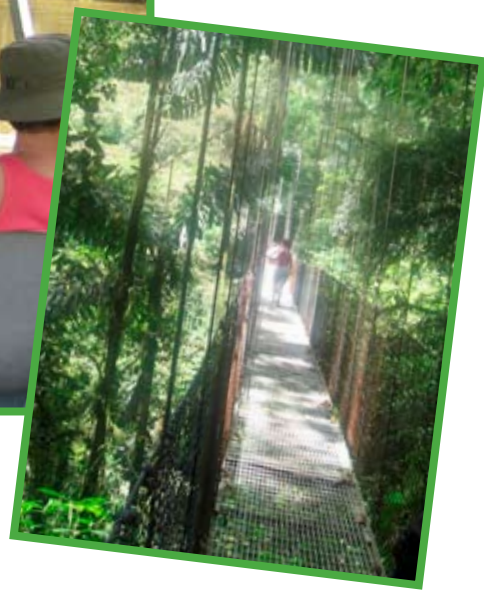
To see things firsthand in the rainforest that I'd only seen in textbooks was really spectacular.

Costa Rica was full of many wonderful experiences. We often started our day by going birding. It was unimaginable how many species of beautiful birds we saw. The animals and trees in the rainforest were spectacular. There was a cacao plantation a little ways through a rainforest where we were able to learn how chocolate is made. Of course, samples of chocolate were given out for our own enjoyment, which put a smile on everyone's face.

—Sophie Lipson '13

On the second day of our trip, we woke up bright and early to go rafting on the Sarapiquí River. Expecting more of a bird-watching, calm motorboat trip, we were all pleasantly surprised to find helmets, paddles, life vests, and outrigger rafts waiting for us. Our guides, Jonathan and José, steered us through the rapids until we reached our destination downstream. We saw various birds but not much other wildlife, as we were very preoccupied paddling and splashing in the water. It was also interesting to see how the river was affected by the recent earthquake. The ripped-off tree trunks, broken bridges, and general debris proved to be difficult obstacles to navigate around!

—Grace McLeod '13



India



JAMA MASJID

During our first full day in India, we left our beloved (yet somewhat mysterious) World Buddhist Center Hotel and headed into the heart of Old Delhi, where we made our first tourist stop at the city's principle mosque, the Jama Masjid. As our cars wound through the hectic Delhi market traffic, we were all instantly taken aback by the beauty and sheer size of the mosque, which is the largest in all of India. Inside the mosque we were welcomed by a professor from the University of Delhi who taught us a little bit about the Islamic religion and the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, who commissioned the Jama Masjid in 1656.

TEMPLE IN DHARAMSALA

Upon arriving in Dharamsala after a grueling 12-hour car ride from Delhi, our group left the hotel and took a walk to a Hindu temple, where we listened to two Hindu women talk about their relationship with religion. The women explained that Hinduism, like any other religion, could be interpreted in many different ways. Hearing the words "tolerance" and "freedom of worship" was enlightening, because it offered us an interpretation of Hinduism that would never be found in textbooks.

CHAMUNDA DEVI TEMPLE

Overlooking mountains, forests, and rivers, the surroundings of the Chamunda Devi Temple provide an excellent venue for meditation, prayers, and spiritual attainments. Not long after we arrived, a Hindu ascetic who called himself

Baba (father) approached us. We were herded into a small room and sat for an hour listening to Baba, and his words melted away much of our discomfort. He not only spoke about what it means to give up all material possessions and embrace asceticism, but he also struck us with his compassion and depth of knowledge about Christianity and Islam. After Baba's talk, we walked down the Ban Ganga River. With gurgling water and the sounds of the forest as our soundtrack, we experienced the wonderful solace and peacefulness that this temple is known for.

HOME STAY

Many of our experiences were unexpected, adventurous, and often uncomfortable, but the home stays surpassed them on all counts. On our second night in Dharamsala, we were paired up with Tibetan families. The experience not only tested our ability to immerse ourselves in another culture, but it also allowed Tibetans to raise awareness about their situation. It offered them a chance to practice their English and learn about other countries and cultures. The morning after our second night we all met in the hotel to say our goodbyes. There was a special ceremony in which we offered white scarves to our "mothers" to show respect and gratitude.

Written by Heidi Kasevich and Süreya Köprülü '09, with contributions from Stefanie Spanfeller '10, Ana Iglesias '09, Luisa Sperry '09, Karla Gomez '10, Nadia Hannan '10, Teal Baskerville '10, Segacy Roberts '10, Nicole Johnson '09, Anna Tarassishina '09, and Carmen Ingerman '09.

It was evident to me how alive the plants were in this kind of ecosystem, with roots, trees, and vines fighting for the most sunlight and nutrients. You don't see that kind of aggression in Central Park.



On our second night in Costa Rica, we went to a bat lecture and were allowed to touch live bats that had been caught on the plantation. Afterward, we released the bats and had a great time watching them fly into the night. The next day we participated in a reforestation project, where we planted native trees in an effort to return cultivated land to natural rainforest. We planted a flat and a half of trees (there were 96 trees per flat). We were dirty and hot—until the rain began to pour. It rained for about 10 minutes, making the hard mud squishy and very difficult to walk in. Overall we had a great time while helping revive the Costa Rican ecosystem.

—Rachel Gines '13

We were fortunate to visit the La Selva Biological Station. This is a place where various scientists and researchers can stay to study the biodiversity of the area. First we crossed a suspension bridge and entered a tropical wet forest. We saw spider monkeys, a great curassow, chestnut mandible toucans, and countless other plant and animal wildlife. It was beautiful and relaxing! That night we went to the local community center, where we took dancing lessons! Our amazing instructors danced perfectly in sync, teaching us the salsa, the merengue, and the Creole swing. This was incredibly fun, and it really gave us a great sense of Costa Rican culture.

—Solveig Gold '13

On our last full day, we visited the parks surrounding Arenal Volcano, including the Arenal Hanging Bridges. There are sixteen bridges in all on this rainforest hike into the mountains. The longest span of the suspension bridges was nearly 290 feet, while the highest distance from the ground was a bit more than 250 feet. On this excursion, it was evident to me how alive the plants were in this kind of ecosystem, with roots, trees, and vines fighting for the most sunlight and nutrients. You don't see that kind of aggressive action in Central Park.

—Marianna Gailus '13



NAMGYAL MONASTERY

One of the main attractions in Dharamsala is the monastery of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. We observed many things while there, including prostrations, monks engaged in debate (an ancient tradition in Tibet used to lead students into Buddhist philosophy and to increase their analytical capacities), and a number of prayer wheels, which are used to accumulate wisdom and merit and to purify negativities.

NORBULINGKA

While staying in Dharamsala, our group visited the Norbulingka Institute, which provides training, employment, and basic care for many Tibetan refugees. It is a vibrant community, living and working to protect the endangered Tibetan culture under the watchful eyes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We witnessed various art forms in production during our visit, including thangkas (paintings often used to assist in the visualization of particular images) and appliqué thangkas (usually made from silk and brocade, sculptures, and woodworks).

TIBETAN FREEDOM FIGHTER

Learning to accept uncertainty and adjusting to a highly flexible itinerary was difficult at first, yet it also led to one of the most interesting, and certainly most emotional, experiences of the trip. When one of our speakers cancelled at the last minute, the man who replaced him was a Tibetan freedom fighter. In 1988, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama proclaimed the Middle Way approach to dealings with China, Lhasang Tsering was one of the first to publicly state his opposition to this idea—he is in favor of Tibet's complete independence from China, rather than a state of "autonomy," which he sees as a euphemism for colonialism and exploitation. Today, he advocates the Mosquito Plan—a plan for the liberation of Tibet that is diametrically opposed to that of His Holiness because it involves the use of violence. He wants Tibetans to band together and attack the communications and transportation infrastructures of China in guerilla bands and thus annoy and frustrate the Chinese like pesky mosquitoes. For now, Lhasang Tsering is spreading the word about the plan, running his bookstore, talking to students in organizations like Students for a Free Tibet, and writing poetry.



My favorite part of the trip was the evening of the last day we were in Costa Rica, when we went to the base of the Arenal Volcano. After entering the “zone of high volcanic risk” and trudging through volcanic rocks for awhile, we came to a beautiful point where we could see the volcano looming above us, with rocks tumbling down its side in the distance. When we turned around, we could see the beautiful Arenal Lake; the view at sunset was especially breathtaking. It was here that I realized how truly lucky I was to be on this trip, learning so much and having so much fun. It made me aware of how amazing nature can be, and how science really is a great way to learn about and explore the world around us. I hope that there will be more incredible opportunities like this at Nightingale in the future.

—Ally Brodsky '13



From hiking through rainforests at five in the morning to climbing to the top of a lava flow with one of the most picturesque views I have ever seen, I could not have imagined a better way to spend my spring break.



Costa Rica was a really special experience for me, mainly because I got to combine all of my favorite things into one amazing trip. I traveled with a lot of my closest friends, and the chaperones, Ms. Jennings and Ms. Vivion, made the trip very enjoyable. I also visited one of the greatest, most diverse places on the planet. I was able to combine fun with science by researching, exploring, and even touching some amazing animal and plant life. To see things I'd only seen in textbooks firsthand in the rainforest was really spectacular. My favorite memory of the trip was climbing the lava rocks at Arenal. There was a beautiful view of Lake Arenal with the canopy of the rainforest before it; the general atmosphere was so surreal. Forget about being a memorable moment on this trip—it was one of the most memorable moments of my life.

—Grace McLeod '13



This trip was truly an unbeatable experience. I did things I had never imagined myself doing: holding a tarantula and a python in the same day! Every second was packed with fun yet educationally enriching activities. From hiking through rainforests at five in the morning to climbing to the top of a lava flow with one of the most picturesque views I have ever seen, I could not have imagined a better way to spend my spring break. The hard work we put in ahead of time was most definitely worth it, and any reservations about traveling with teachers were quickly put aside when we saw how much fun Ms. Jennings and Ms. Vivion were. From playing charades when we had a flat tire to relaxing in the hotel room, it was never awkward being around our teachers—they became our best friends. Now whenever I feel stressed, I just sit back and imagine myself in the hot springs of Arenal Paraiso or the hammock at Selva Verde; I'm sipping a tropical drink or some fabulous Costa Rican coffee, and I let the sound of the howler monkeys take over.

—Solveig Gold '13

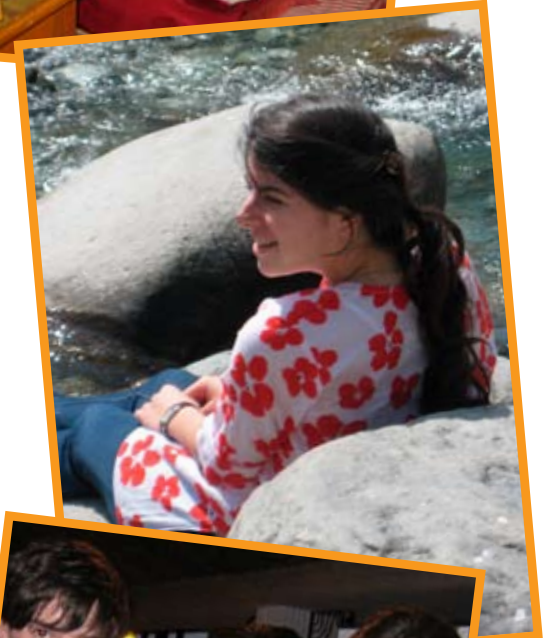
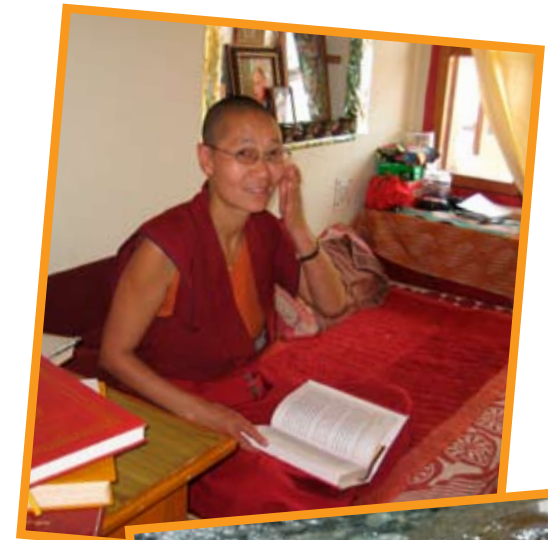
AGRA FORT

The Agra Fort is one of the most well-known sites in India, aside from the Taj Mahal. During the Mughal Dynasty, the Agra Fort served as one of the central locations of living and governing for all six of the Mughal emperors. Inside, we saw how Islam not only inspired the style of the buildings, but also influenced their layout. The royal women lived separately from the men: the queens each had their own palace, and the 300 or so royal concubines lived together in their own building. The women had their own mosque, their own inner-palace bazaar that men were not allowed into, and they even had their own underground dungeon.

TAJ MAHAL

On our last day in Agra we visited both the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. The Taj Mahal was built by Shah Jahan as a tribute to his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died during childbirth. It was built in a style that combines elements from Persian, Ottoman, Indian, and Islamic architecture and was greatly influenced by the Jama Masjid. Known for its symmetry, the Taj Mahal sits on a raised platform surrounded by four minarets. Inside are delicate mosaic works and marble walls adorned with intricate patterns of inlaid precious stones. Inside the mausoleum, because Muslim tradition forbids elaborate decoration of graves, Mumtaz and Shah Jahan are laid in a relatively plain crypt beneath the inner chamber, with their faces turned right toward Mecca. It is said that Shah Jahan planned to build another mahal in all black marble across the Yamuna River to face the Taj: one for him and one for her. The Taj Mahal truly represents the crowning jewel of Indo-Islamic architecture. Yet, behind the monument's beauty and majesty of form, behind the purity of its line, and behind the sober refinement of its decoration, is an autocratic ruler flaunting his grandeur and nobility to the world. However, the Taj Mahal, with its picturesque setting, chaste appearance, plastic delicacy, superfine ornamentation, and gentle molding of contours, also stands as a feminine specimen of art; it can be interpreted as a glorious and profound symbol of love.

With gurgling water and the sounds of the forest as our soundtrack, we experienced the wonderful solace and peacefulness that the Chamunda Devi Temple is known for.



Love's Lessons

Dini von Mueffling '84 has spent almost two decades leading an HIV/AIDS education program in New York City, and she does it all for the love of a friend

by Alissa Kinney

In 1992 Dini von Mueffling '84 and her friends, Stefani Greenfield and Victoria Leacock, faced a tough reality—life without their friend. Alison Gertz had been a bubbly, vivacious young woman, but at 26 years old she was dying from AIDS after contracting the HIV virus from a single, unprotected sexual encounter with a man she had developed a crush on when she was 16 years old. Some might have walked away from the nightmare of watching your best friend waste away and just tried to forget. Some might have crumbled or let the anger consume them. But Dini was determined to do none of these; she was determined to do all she could to ensure that such a tragedy never happened again.

As a teenager from the right side of the tracks in the 1980s, Ali knew little about the disease or how one became infected, and she certainly never would have thought she was at risk. She was a nice girl with a loving family and adoring friends. She was often in long-term, monogamous relationships. She did not do drugs. She did not run with a fast crowd. But then she got sick, and when a doctor thought to test her for HIV, the results came back positive. Ali used to recall that when the doctor broke the news to her and her stunned parents, he had tears in his eyes.

To come out as HIV positive in the '80s was to accept being cast as a social pariah, but Ali sought to change that—if the girl next door could get AIDS, anyone could. She let her loved ones know that she did not plan on spending her last days drinking rum punches on a sandy beach or retreating from the world, secluded in her apartment.

Instead, she would fight to raise awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and she was going to do it by going into schools, where she could reach those most vulnerable to the disease. She set to work, traveling to schools and television broadcasts to discuss her diagnosis and how others could avoid it. She appeared on the cover of *People* magazine; Molly Ringwald starred in a television movie based on her story. In the summer of 1992, however, Ali's immune system had weakened significantly, and she fell ill for the last time. Dini recalls feeling determined after the passing of her friend: "Ali had worked tremendously hard after her diagnosis to educate other young people. She had become a household name. Continuing her work wasn't a choice; it was obvious and necessary. When your best friend dies in your arms at age 26, you don't walk away from that unchanged. It was heart-breakingly motivating."

LOVE HEALS

Dini, Stefani, and Victoria tried to pick up where Ali had left off. They founded Love Heals and began contacting schools to continue Ali's legacy by telling her story, giving the young people who filled the gymnasiums and auditoriums the opportunity to gain information and engage in frank discussion. Dini was focused on conveying the reality of HIV/AIDS, no matter how difficult or awkward. "Our approach was to give them all the facts, in a non-judgmental way." She remembers the absolute silence that hung in the air as teenagers in particularly high-risk communities around the city



Clockwise from top: Dini von Mueffling '84, Stefani Greenfield, and Victoria Leacock, founders of Love Heals; graduates of the Leadership Empowerment and Awareness Program for Girls; one of the many Love Heals educators speaking to a New York City class

listened intently to the story of a young woman who had had everything going for her; they listened as the friends who had watched her deteriorate warned them that AIDS overlooks no one. Nightingale was the first school they spoke at after Ali's passing; as Dini's alma mater, it was monumental to her that her friend's story would be passed through the blue doors.

As the reputation of Love Heals grew, the speaking engagements became more frequent, and word reached the New York City Board of Education, who requested a meeting with Dini and the other leaders of the organization. Up until that point, Love Heals had gone into public schools under the board's radar—their realistic, no-holds-barred approach was not always compatible with the board's message of AIDS prevention through abstinence. The reputation of Love Heals was growing dramatically, however, and now the board was on to them. Dini and the others were nervous that their refusal to have their message edited would result in the board denying them continued access to the city's public school students. A gifted speaker, Dini stood before the board members on the day of the meeting and launched into a sample presentation; by the end, many were in tears. The raw power of HIV/AIDS statistics among New York City's teen population, combined with Ali's haunting story, led to the board of education granting Love Heals official permission to go into the city's schools. Under normal circumstances, this process would've taken months. Most importantly? "We never changed one word of what we said," Dini says.

The strides that Love Heals has made in its 17-year history are extraordinary. Akira Barclay, the current director of

development, points out that in 1992, Dini, Stefani, and Victoria visited 50 high school students; this past year, they reached 50,000. Barclay estimates that by the fall of 2009, Love Heals will have educated over 400,000 young people. While Dini is thrilled with these numbers, she is hardly ready to declare her mission accomplished. She stresses the importance the program's practice of bringing HIV-positive speakers into schools, revealing intimate—sometimes painful—details of their stories. She watches these speakers make connections with students, and knows how meaningful such bonds can be to teens engaging in risky behavior. To Dini, this is victory—she knows that they will not be able to reach everyone in an audience, but seeing that they have truly affected some students is what spurs her on.

In 2006, Love Heals decided it needed to act on reports of increasing HIV-infection rates among young women of color living in New York City. To this end, it created the Leadership Empowerment and Awareness Program for Girls (LEAP). Today, LEAP for Girls has trained 183 peer leaders, who, in turn, have reached over 1,700 girls who are most at risk, through service projects the peer leaders themselves have developed and implemented.

Dini is confident in the power of Love Heals and its future: "Our biggest victory is ahead of us. When comprehensive HIV/AIDS education is part of all health curricula nationwide, then we have done our job. When infection rates decline dramatically, that will be another victory. Our goal has always been to go out of business because our work isn't needed anymore."



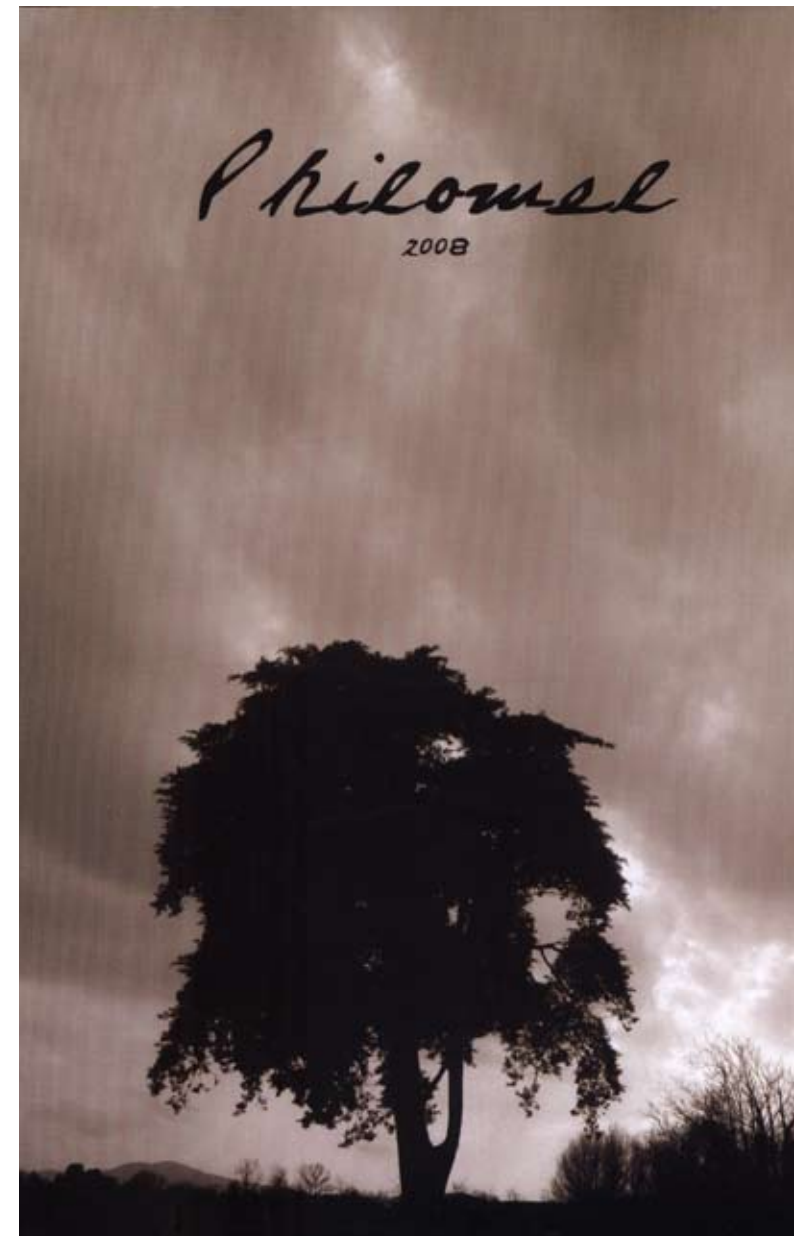
Painting by Lucia Perez '10.
16" x 20", oil on canvas, 2009.

Hallways



On the morning of Friday, February 20, Kindergarten girls kicked off their Mardi Gras celebration by making glittering, festive crowns and wearing traditional beads. The girls were led by teachers Kendra Auerbach '02, Amanda Stetson Espy '97, Marisue Cummins, and Naomi Hayashi. Special thanks to Michele Raynor Littenberg '87 and her husband Michael for their participation.

POWER OF THE PEN



What qualities do you think an editor should possess?

Philomel editors have assumed ever more authority over the years. The co-editors (there is an associate literary editor, as well) ultimately determine the contents. With few exceptions, the editors tend to have worked on the magazine all four years of high school; moreover, the voting staff recognizes the writers most committed to, and able to, direct the magazine. The best editors have the gift of reading others well; these editors direct the staff in how to read a submission; they point out what works and how what works can be enhanced. This editorial process is one of the features that distinguishes *Philomel* from other school publications, which, as a rule, tend to take every submission and make no other editorial changes than those that grammar necessitates.

Philomel brings award-winning writers in to Nightingale to speak with students—why is this important?

Saturday writing workshops in poetry, fiction, and drama have been offered since the funding [for our creative writing program] began in 2000. Two assemblies a year are devoted to introducing students to accomplished poets and fiction writers. Mary Jo Salter, Mark Doty, Billy Collins, Tobias Wolff, Mary Karr, Mary Gordon, George Saunders, to name a few, have read at Nightingale. Other visiting writers read from and discuss their books at *Philomel* meetings. (Some writers come to individual teachers' classes.) I doubt there are many high schools that can boast of the writing visitors we have had, which include Jhumpa Lahiri before she was Jhumpa Lahiri, and other rising stars, such as Claire Messud and Danzy Senna.

What do you enjoy most about working with students on their writing?

My greatest pleasure is seeing a student unleashed and excited by what she's put on the page and also—very importantly—witnessing her willingness to play with her own work, resisting her own favorite lines in favor of sustaining the work in its entirety.

If you could pick any writer, living or dead, to visit Nightingale, who would it be and why?

Who would I pick? Who would I pick from the dead—there are too many living and I know some of them—Faulkner would be drunk and didn't like to travel, anyway, so he's out. Flannery O'Connor was most often too sick to travel. Robert Lowell is a god and even dead intimidates me, so he's out of the running. Virginia Woolf would be my choice; she has something to say to women about that room of one's own.

This year, Nightingale's literary magazine, *Philomel*, was honored by the Columbia Scholastic Press with a prestigious Gold Crown Award—only eight high school magazines in the entire country were chosen to receive this distinction. This also marks the ninth time that *Philomel* has received a Gold Crown (it has also received three Silver Crowns). To recognize these accolades, we asked Christine Schutt, *Philomel's* faculty advisor and resident mentor to all of Nightingale's budding writers, to talk with us about the magazine.

NIGHTINGALE WELCOMES

NEW ADMINISTRATORS

This summer, Nightingale-Bamford welcomes two new staff members: Head of Middle School Noni Thomas and Director of College Counseling Heather Beveridge.



Ms. Thomas arrives at Nightingale with an impressive list of experiences and credentials, including a BA in English from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; an MA in private school leadership from Teachers College at Columbia University; as well as tenures at the Calhoun School, the Little Red School House, and Elisabeth Irwin High School.

Though she originally planned on a career in law, Ms. Thomas' lack of enthusiasm for the field led her to try her hand as a fifth-grade teacher's assistant at Greensboro Day School in North Carolina. Working one-on-one with a particular student who was struggling helped Ms. Thomas to realize that she had made the right choice, and education became her career. She has been fascinated ever since: "Children are constant surprises and constant teachers. I love seeing what they are going to teach me next."

Ms. Thomas says she is excited by the prospect of working on Nightingale's mission both in and out of the classroom—she will teach a section of English in addition to her administrative duties—and she has been impressed by the way the school combines academic rigor with a highly valued sense of humor.

HEALTHY EATING AT NIGHTINGALE

As part of a general effort to offer healthier eating options at Nightingale, Chef Vazquez has worked with our food service provider, Cater To You, to ensure that our community is educated and aware of what we need to stay healthy and strong in the midst of our often busy lives.

- Fruits and vegetables are purchased from local farms
- Beef and poultry are antibiotic and hormone free
- Carbonated beverages have been eliminated from the vending machines

She envisions a community where the girls feel free to "fully express themselves, take risks, make mistakes, try on different identities, and demonstrate their talents and passions." She also looks forward to meeting the girls of Nightingale-Bamford: "I am quite privileged that I will have the opportunity to work with these impressive young women every day. I can't wait to see what they have to teach me!"

We are also pleased to welcome Ms. Heather Beveridge, who will serve as director of college counseling and will join Damaris Wollenburg Maclean '97 in our college counseling office. Ms. Beveridge comes to Nightingale by way of New York University's Office of Undergraduate Admissions and, most recently, the Horace Mann School, where she served as the associate director of college counseling. With this mix of experience, Ms. Beveridge arrives at Nightingale having been on both sides of the college admissions desk. "It is not possible to have a boring day working as a college counselor," she says. "You are working with students who are at a very exciting point in their lives as they examine and choose the kind of educational community that will best prepare them for lives that are rewarding, challenging, and caring."



Ms. Beveridge is involved with numerous organizations and associations for college counselors and contributed a chapter to *The New Rules of College Admissions* (2006), from Fireside Books. "The welcome I have received, especially from students and parents, has confirmed that joining Nightingale was the right choice for me. I can't wait for the school year to begin!"

- Traditional vending machine snacks have been replaced by natural, healthier options
- Recess snacks are now organic and all-natural
- Canned foods have been eliminated
- Sweet desserts are now served only once a week
- Sauces, soups, and stocks are all prepared from scratch
- More whole grains and whole wheat pastas are used
- Seasonal menus have been designed and implemented, showcasing fresh foods that are in their peak season

SPRING PRODUCTIONS



Nightingale's drama department delivered another season of stand-out productions this spring, featuring Class VII's *The Pirates of Penzance* and the Upper School's wildly popular *Guys and Dolls*. In both plays, the girls showed off their musical and comedic talents for a series of enthusiastic audiences in the H. Dale Hemmerdinger Auditorium.



The women of Nightingale gathered on Randall's Island this past May for the annual Middle and Upper School Field Day. Between epic tug-of-war battles and potato sack races, the Nighthawks enjoyed a day filled with school spirit and team bonding. Top: Nightingale's Upper School waits for the games to begin. Bottom: Class X gives it their all.



The fifth annual Robo Expo took place at Nightingale on April 25, 2009. Students from 11 area schools—including Spence, Fieldston, and Marymount—displayed robots they had created, participated in a variety of robotics challenges (from completing a maze to throwing a ball at a specified height and distance), and even programmed their robots to dance to music. The expo was founded in 2005 to provide a non-competitive robotics event for students and to help develop a larger robotics community.



AWARDS SEASON AT NIGHTINGALE

17
Nightingale students whose high scores on the National French Exam led them to top national rankings

9
Gold Crown Awards that have been awarded to Nightingale's literary magazine, *Philomel*, by the Columbia Scholastic Press

2
Pulitzer Prize finalists teaching at Nightingale (Christine Schutt, for her book *All Souls*, and John Loughery, for his book *The Other Side of Silence*)

109
Nightingale students who received an award based on the National Latin Exam scores

14
Nightingale students who earned a perfect score on the National Latin Exam

19
Players on Nightingale's 2009 AAIS Championship lacrosse team

2
Points Nightingale's lacrosse team beat Chapin by to clinch that coveted AAIS League Championship (Nightingale prevailed 9-7)

4
Nightingale seniors who were named National Merit Scholarship finalists in 2009



NIGHTINGALE STUDENTS SING IN CARNEGIE HALL

Select members of the Nightingale music program performed in Carnegie Hall on May 23, 2009, as part of a special concert of treble voices sponsored by MidAmerica Productions. After several days in rehearsals, our girls joined 130 other student and adult voices from the United States and Canada to present works by Copland, Rutter, Bach, and others. Jean Ashworth Bartle, founder and former conductor of the Toronto Children's Chorus and one of the leading figures in treble choir singing, conducted the chorus and the New England Symphonic Ensemble.

Participating students included Christina Bott '09, Elizabeth Adler '10, Shannon Ashley '10, Sherraine Ashley '10, Segacy Roberts '10, Lizzie Couch '13, Marianna Gailus '13, Solveig Gold '13, and Maya Kaufman '13.



Afua Addo '97, pictured with Ms. Hutcheson, spoke movingly about the importance of scholarships at Nightingale; below, benefit tri-chairs Holly Rochell, Bari Schlesinger, and Linda Thorpe



GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our March 5 community celebration! We had more than 400 parents, alumnae, and friends pack the circus-themed gymnasium, mingling among jugglers and stilt-walkers and enjoying delicious food and wine provided by Paola's Restaurant. With a silent auction, a raffle, and a host of fund-raising tables, we raised more than \$200,000 for the Scholarship Fund!



NIGHTINGALE FAIR

November 7, 2009
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
At the schoolhouse

It's that time again—Nightingale's longest-running tradition arrives this fall as we host the 2009 Nightingale Fair! A myriad of activities, class booths, games, boutiques, and food stands take over the schoolhouse for one big, blowout Saturday. Parents, alumnae, students, neighbors, and friends are all invited. For more information, please visit www.nightingale.org/events—see you in November!



ISSY JAMES '12

Jenny James will never forget the phone call she received one day from her daughter Issy's new ski instructor. The instructor was dumbfounded; Issy, he said, was a complete natural on the slopes, skiing down the most difficult runs as if she had been "a skier in a previous lifetime." At the time, Issy was three years old.

This phone call foreshadowed what has become a central piece of Issy's life: competitive Alpine racing. The sport has brought her to international competitions in locations such as Italy and Australia, and has forced Issy to become more organized and focused in her dedication to her schoolwork than most teens could fathom. This was perhaps best illustrated last February, when Issy competed all day in the New York Alpine division of the U.S. Ski

Association Championships before jumping in the car at 2:00 a.m. in order to catch a flight out of JFK airport the next day for Italy, where she then skied in the Junior World Championships. Issy completed her Nightingale homework for that week in the back of the car during the late-night drive and submitted her assignments to her teachers via the school Web site.

Though the hours are long and the conditions can be quite fierce—toe-warmers have proven to be an absolute necessity—Issy and her family believe that her Alpine adventures have brought them closer together. From the start of a given competition until the very end, win or lose, the family makes it a point to stay on the mountain and support Issy throughout. Jenny reflects: "As a family, it has given us a sport we can all participate in, [as well as a way for us to] spend time together."

Reunion 2009



Over 100 alumnae from classes ending in 4s and 9s came back to Nightingale to celebrate their Reunion this past April. The Class of 1959 spent an afternoon with their pen pals in Class IV after a special luncheon on Friday, April 17 (see page 32), then joined Upper School students and fellow alumnae for the annual Founders' Day assembly. Dini von Mueffling '84 was awarded the Alumnae Achievement Award for her work educating youth about HIV/AIDS (see page 18), and Alison Sellin Weiskopf '81 was honored for her work on the Alumnae Board with the Alumnae Service Award.

Friday evening found a terrific crowd assembled in the schoolhouse for a reception with Head of School Dorothy A. Hutcheson, followed by the Class of 1999 reading their 10-year letters. The weekend was concluded with a beautiful reception and dinner at the Maritime Hotel on Saturday evening for Reunion classes.

Reunion 2010 is just around the corner, celebrating Nightingale's 90th Anniversary, as well as alumnae from classes ending in 5s and 0s. More information at www.nightingale.org/reunion.

Voices

Here we feature an essay by a member of the Nightingale community. If you would like to share some of your thoughts or experiences with others in the community, please contact us at bluedoors@nightingale.org.



Julie Metz '77 is a prominent book designer—she was featured in the summer 2007 issue of *The Blue Doors* for her work—and newly published author of the acclaimed memoir *Perfection*.

Back in 1977, the year I graduated from Nightingale, I never planned on becoming a writer. I was going to be an artist and I took on that identity at a young age with quiet pride. I spent many hours upstairs in the art room in an attempt to deserve the label.

Then, as now, labels were important. Our time was more about artful grunge than logo-printed handbags, so the labels I speak of were less flashy but the red and white tabs on the back of our tattered and embroidered Levi's were critical signifiers. I spent many other hours in a long-gone downtown vintage clothing shop scrounging for dresses I hoped would complete the picture of a bohemian artist.

For a kid from the still scruffy Upper West Side, my identity as an artist-to-be was my ticket to the future and, as the daughter of two list-making parents, I made my plans accordingly. After I arrived at Smith College, I whipped open the course catalog, studied the requirements for a major in Fine Arts and set about filling them in short order. While other friends experimented, taking a psychology course here and an anthropology course there, I rarely deviated from my path. I took English courses because I loved to read or because my roommate persuaded me that a certain Women's Lit course offered that semester was a must. I took French classes because my dream was to go to Paris to study at the famous Sorbonne Art School. I was a young woman on a mission.

After going abroad (I found the Sorbonne a surprising disappointment), and a final year on campus during which I discovered my love of typography, I graduated in 1981 and returned to New York City and to my first job in graphic design, a practical girl's art career and a natural choice coming from a family of, er, graphic designers. I approached my career with the same focus as my college major, pursuing the niche of book jacket design.

I was not a writer. I had friends who were writers and in the end I married a writer. I loved stories and read voraciously, but for most of my life all I wrote were letters to friends scattered about the globe.

Things changed after the sudden death of my husband in 2003. Six months after his death I discovered that he had been unfaithful for many years. The most damaging affair was with the mother of my daughter's best friend, someone I had also considered a friend. As my own life began to resemble the plot of a Tom Perotta novel, I felt an urge to write. Letter writing had always been a comfort in the past and so it was again as I tried to make sense of what had happened to my marriage and formed a new plan for my midlife. As the memoir took shape, I discovered that a writing life suited my nature and that I wanted to pursue it as avidly as I had my artistic endeavors.

Now in my fiftieth year, I am a published author and no one could be more surprised than I am. My book, *Perfection: A Memoir of Betrayal and Renewal*, tells the story of those events following my husband's death. Shortly after completing it, I began working on a new project, a novel.

This time, in a situation where my deadlines are more self-imposed, I try to make more room in my life for the unexpected, so that my characters and their interactions can reveal themselves to me. As the novel's story emerges, I am wishing I'd taken a college course in psychology, anthropology, not to mention botany and car mechanics, but somehow I am stumbling along into my second career.