

**BROOKLYN
FRIENDS
SCHOOL**

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7, No. 5 June 2010

Taking the World by Surprise

by Joan Martin

With words of encouragement from their peers and guest speakers, the 30 members of the Brooklyn Friends School Class of 2010 received their high school diplomas on June 10, well-prepared and eager to move into the next phase of their lives.

Commencement was held at the Brooklyn Bridge Marriott Hotel, with Head of School **Michael Nill**, Board of Trustees Co-chair **Alice Pope**, and Head of Upper School **Roxanne Zazzaro** presiding. In accordance with Upper School tradition, members of the class chose the faculty speaker, physics teacher **Joe Kremer**, and the class speakers, **Asha Boston '10** and **Andrew Lamb '10**. **Nancy Gibbs**, Executive Editor of TIME magazine, was the commencement speaker, and a Brooklyn Friends School alumna from the Class of 1983, **Dena Douglas**, also addressed the graduates. Judge Douglas received the George Fox Distinguished Alumna Award.

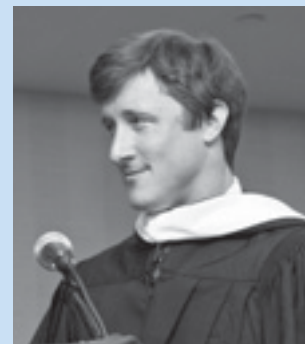
Nancy Gibbs began her speech by commending the graduates and their peers nationwide. When compared to previous generations, she said, "You know more than we did, you have worked harder . . . You are, statistically, twice as likely to do volunteer work, much less likely to smoke or drink or drop out. . . You are more musical,

more fashionable, more theatrical, more global – and according to a huge survey by the Pew Research Center – less likely to argue with your parents than earlier generations."

The world is changing so rapidly and unpredictably, she told the graduates, that they need to "put surprise" on their agenda. "You can't schedule it, but you can welcome it, embrace it, and above all, don't fear it." Ms. Gibbs went on to share that many of the innovations and success stories in history and culture came about accidentally or by surprise: "We live in a country settled by Europeans who found it while looking for someplace else. . . . We owe our health to medicines discovered by scientists looking for something else." Being prepared for and accepting of surprise – and differentiating between the things one can change and can't change – are sound lessons as the graduates go forth, she said, and "take the world by surprise."

Faculty speaker **Joe Kremer**, who has known and taught each of the graduates, told the students, "It's the richness and complexity of our experiences that makes our connections to people the most valuable aspect of our lives." A physics teacher, he taught a mini-lesson in buoyancy, and told the graduates that they have learned how to push and push back at BFS, adding a

continued on next page



All photos, left to right, Fabian Kaupert receiving his diploma from Board Co-chair Alice Pope; Faculty Speaker Joe Kremer, a pre-graduation group photo of Kamau Carter, Andrew Lamb (Class Speaker) Jean Luc Ohayon, Zander Daley, Ahmad Rana and Leovanny Fernandez; a post-graduation huddle; Commencement Speaker Nancy Gibbs, Executive Editor of TIME magazine

Commencement

continued from page 1

wish for them to continue to grow “inward and upward.”

Asha and Andrew, the class speakers, recalled the ways in which their class grew and worked together, experienced Quaker Meeting, and developed into a community. “Remember the lessons we learned along the way,” Asha told her classmates.

“These are patience, perseverance and leadership.” Andrew’s remarks underscored the diversity of the senior class, the closeness they experienced inside and outside of school, and their self-reliance, stating, “We have the ability to change the world.”

Indeed, members of the BFS Class of 2010 they are headed to a wide variety of colleges that reflect the diversity of their interests and talents.

Wherever they go, the education and life lessons the graduates learned at Brooklyn Friends School will serve them well, said the evening’s final speaker, the Honorable Dena Douglas ’83. A Civil Court Judge in Kings County, Ms. Douglas told the graduates that she always knew that her 13 years at BFS would help her handle any of life’s challenges. And she reminded students that being successful is not dependent on your title or station in life, “it’s about your ability to connect with and motivate people.”



The Honorable Dena Douglas '83



From left, Class Speaker Asha Boston, Kaveise Cadogan, and Jamara Hill



From left, Emma Schubert with her mother Cynthia Strauss and Anna Eden with her mother Maura Eden



From left, Julius Chen receives his diploma from Alice Pope; Charles Leeds with his mother Susan Bridges, and twin sisters Mariella and Marlene Dominguez. For more photos go to brooklynfriends.org/alumni

THE GRADUATES AND THEIR COLLEGE CHOICES

Kate Ambrosio
Centenary College, NJ

Asha Boston
Agnes Scott College, GA

Frank Bull
Occidental College, CA

Kaveise Cadogan
Pitzer College, CA

Kamau Carter
Seton Hall University, NJ

Julius Chen
University of Rochester, NY

Zander Daley
School of Visual Art, NY

Mariella Dominguez
gap year

Marlene Dominguez
SUNY New Paltz, NY

Anna Eden
Ithaca College, NY

Leovanny Fernandez
Bowdoin College, ME

Rufaro Gulstone
Howard University, DC

Jamara Hill
Marymount Manhattan College, NY

Fabian Kaupert
Bennington College, VT

Serra Kefeli
Elon University, NC

Sophia Ladouceur
Skidmore College, NY

Andrew Lamb
Howard University, DC

Charles Leeds
Colby College, ME

Shaquille Malcolm
Carleton College, MN

Jean Luc Ohayon
St. John's University, NY

Asha Paul
Carnegie Mellon University, PA

Ahmad Rana
Davidson College, NC

Emma Schubert
American University, DC

Allison Shyer
Bard College, NY

Maqueda Sylvan
SUNY Delhi, NY

Axita Vora
SUNY Geneseo, NY

David Waldron
Hampton University, VA

Sibyl Weise
Earlham College, IN

Dominique White
Hampshire College, MA

Taj Zahran
Elon University, NC

MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL MICHAEL NILL

I can really tell the end is near, now that I sit down to compose my last newsletter article as head of school. Over the years this column has been a valuable vehicle for me to discuss with the community the many changes, challenges, and educational issues as they relate to the school's mission and well-being.

If I may use this opportunity to look back over ten years, what I see is a story of significant change, but ultimately it's equally one of continuity.

Certainly there has been much change. The instructional program at all levels has grown and been strengthened; an International Baccalaureate Program has been instituted; demand for enrollment has grown; our communications materials have been professionalized; there is a stronger commitment to voluntary giving; an exemplary strategic plan is in place with clear goals to increase faculty salaries, professional development, and financial aid;

a plan is in place for a systematic expansion of enrollment; our presence in downtown Brooklyn has been significantly elevated; through our Horizons Program we have joined a national effort to close the achievement gap in public school children from low income families; the school is now its own 501c3, separately incorporated from the New York Quarterly Meeting; we renovated major program spaces at 375 Pearl St – play roof, science labs, Meeting House/Theater, the 3rd floor library; we are poised to create a new home for our Preschool and Lower School, and, as part of that process, reunite the Upper and Middle Schools at Pearl Street, thus allowing for a more consciously unified program for those two divisions.

An abundance of changes, yes. On the other hand, I'd say the heart and soul of Brooklyn Friends are the same: we've remained true to the school's Quaker mission while these other changes are taking place. When I came to the school, I was struck by how passionately

families believed in the school's mission. This is as true now as it was then.

What I have valued most about independent schools is the importance they put on creating community and having a mission that extends beyond honing academic skills to molding character. When I came to Brooklyn Friends, I found a heightened commitment to those larger aspects of education. The moral, spiritual, and values part of education was not just something in the mission, or something to bring out at an assembly, but something woven into the very fabric of day-to-day life. It was, so to speak, the conversation in the hallways. That is what made me feel that I had arrived home. And BFS has been a home for me. What is at its heart and soul is so important for our children and for our future.

As I look to the future, I again want to express my belief that the school has made an excellent choice for its new school head, in Dr. Larry Weiss. I believe he understands the



heart and soul of the institution, but also understands how crucial it is to further the work that has been done to strengthen the curriculum and academic reputation of the school, moving us toward that point when those who enroll do so with the belief that they will be lifers. I am looking forward in my retirement to the pleasure of hearing of the future successes of the school.

And to close, let me again say how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to serve this institution. I can only say I hope that I have been as good for it, as I feel it has enriched me.

Michael

A Community Says "Thank You"



Beginning with the Spring Gala on April 30 (see page 11), every segment of the BFS community expressed their appreciation for Michael Nill's service as head of school and bid him and his wife Irene farewell as they

begin anew in Austin, Texas. Third and fourth graders serenaded Michael with a rendition of "Deep in the Heart of Texas" at their closing (photo above); the Class of 1960 asked Michael to become an honorary member of their class on Alumni Day; the Athletics program gave Michael a personalized baseball jersey (No. 15); and the Parent and Teacher Association (PAT) held a giant, schoolwide Block Party (photo at right) to celebrate the school year and give Michael a super send-off!



Wearing his Brooklyn Friends baseball jersey, Michael receives a New York City Council Proclamation at the Block Party.

“A Wonderful Legacy” FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT BFS

The board asked me what I would like to be remembered for,” Head of School **Michael Nill** recalled. “My choice, the most important part of this school, is Professional Development. The faculty is the heart of the school, and I’ve always said that the best educated kids need the best educated faculty. I decided this would be a wonderful legacy.”

During his tenure, Michael Nill allotted more funds to each department for offsite and onsite professional development than his predecessors, strongly urged faculty to participate and share their newfound knowledge with their colleagues, and encouraged them to collaborate through summer curriculum grants.

“He has increased our awareness of ourselves as teachers who need to grow,” said Upper School Head **Roxanne Zazzaro**. “He brought that sense that there are many facets to being a teacher. There’s an allowance of a broad definition of professional development.” For instance, Roxanne has attended a national conference for public school teachers, something which she doubts most independent schools would have allowed. “Our faculty have also presented at conferences,” she added. “Those are the kinds of things Michael has fostered.”

Roxanne also traveled to speak in St. Petersburg, Russia, during the 2005-06 school year to present educators there with a snapshot of how Brooklyn Friends School operates, including its mission, its core values, and faculty. “There has been a growing awareness in Russia of charter schools and independent schools,” she said, “and they reached out to us.” In 2010 she and faculty member **Jeffrey Cox** attended the NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) annual **People of Color Conference** and gave a presentation to their peers, thanks to the school’s professional development funds.

“And of course there’s IB training,” Roxanne added, referring to the intensive courses the Upper School faculty need to complete as part of the **International Baccalaureate Diploma Program**.

Many faculty attend Quaker-specific conferences offered by the **Friends Council on Education** and usually held at Pendle Hill, a study and retreat center in Pennsylvania. Upper School math teacher and IB Coordinator **Trefor Davies** has attended some of these workshops and strongly recommends them to other teachers, not just introductory workshops on Quakerism. He is currently participating in a two-year course in Quaker Leadership. Second grade teacher **Jonathan Edmonds** is enrolled in the **Friends Council SPARC** (Spirited Practice And Renewed Courage) program, a two-year cycle delving deeply into the art and calling of Quaker teaching.

Lower School Head **Jackie Condie** isn’t surprised at her teachers’ enthusiasm for professional growth. “From the time I’ve been here it’s been encouraged,” she said. “We’ve sent teachers to the Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Massachusetts, for week-long

math workshops; to writing programs at Columbia Teacher’s College; to Friends Council environmental programs; and to NYSAIS workshops on everything from gender to brain research.”

The constant flow of assistant teachers in the Lower School also ensures the flow of fresh concepts. “Most of the assistant teachers are in grad school,” she continued, “so there’s a constant conversation about new ideas coming into the classroom.”

Jackie and Curriculum Coordinator **Diane Mackie** are big promoters of having their faculty share the knowledge they have gained through professional workshops with their colleagues. “In a learning community, what I want is not just the children – but the children’s teachers – to learn and grow,” she said. Diane seconds that belief, and works hard to make it happen. “Michael has allotted more money, and the Lower School spends every penny of it,” she said. She tries to ensure that the individual teachers’ experiences offsite aren’t isolating for them, or for their colleagues. “You go, it’s stimulating, you come back, you’re recharged, and that’s great, but we go one step further so the teachers’ development directly impacts our curriculum.” Diane cited the time that

some Lower School teachers received grants to develop children’s stories into plays so they could be read aloud in class by students as a form of reader’s theater. “It’s hard to find age-appropriate plays,” she said, “so they created their own plays for use by all the division’s teachers. We’ve also introduced new writing and phonics programs in the kindergarten. Kindergarten teacher **Alison Ullrich** attended a conference on grapho-motor

skills with a goal to review our then-current curriculum against the recent research in this area.” Alison then presented a plan for how the faculty should best proceed with developing fine motor and handwriting ability in the classroom.

“New research is quite revealing,” continued Diane. “The whole critical thinking, problem-solving area has changed so much. For those of us who went to school 30 years ago, it’s important to stay current.” She described consonant and vowel sound and motion exercises now in use in kindergarten. “Someone who has been teaching for 35 years, **Jane Morrissey**, is as excited about it as **Peta-Gaye Grey**, a first year head teacher.”

Diane pointed out that Michael was instrumental in getting **Atlas Curriculum Mapping** in use by teachers schoolwide. A highly regarded software product in use at many schools, Atlas allows faculty to document their syllabi and lesson plans so they can be compared and contrasted with other courses from preschool through senior year. “It lets teachers talk together, collaborate, look for gaps and redundancies.”

Jackie lauded Michael for not being wedded to one kind of teacher. “He believes there’s much to be gained from various philosophies and teaching styles. What greater message is there about teachers than that they are continuous, ongoing learners?”

To recognize his service to Brooklyn Friends School, the Board of Trustees authorized the creation of The Michael Nill Endowment Fund for Faculty Professional Development. Ten percent of all gifts to the Brooklyn Friends Fund in the 2009-2010 have been allocated to this Fund, and \$130,000 was raised for the Fund at the spring gala on April 30, 2010 (see page 11). This is a permanent endowed fund, to which contributions may be made in perpetuity. In this article, the school’s educational leaders talk about Michael’s legacy and the impact that much-needed professional development funding has had on their programs, their teachers, and the students of Brooklyn Friends School.

Announcements & Achievements



Brooklyn Friends School has been named a “Top School” for the State of New York in the 2009-2010 Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY) Talent Search. This award recognizes that BFS has a solid core of very high achieving students and that the school encourages students and their parents to investigate specialized academic options like CTY. In addition, seven BFS middle school students have received CTY awards based on their performance on above-grade-level standardized testing: 8th grader **Alana Canty-Samuel**, 6th graders **Nicholas Goldrosen** and **Mason Leist**, and 5th graders **Rocco Blum**, **Hildagard Gabel**, **Kieran Huang**, and **Gemma Sack**.

Middle School Latin and Spanish teacher **Michael Kabot** (above) has been selected from a nationwide application pool as a **National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Scholar** to attend an institute entitled “Houses of Mortals and Gods.” The institute will read and discuss the literature and culture of ancient Rome and make site visits in Rome and in and around the Bay of Naples. The first week of the program will be held at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland in Baltimore, and then move to Italy for the next four weeks.

Kieran Newcomb '11 (photo below in foreground) finished in first place (800 m) at the May 26 Independent Schools State Championship for Track. He then posted a career-best time of 1:58:31 at the June 12 New York State Federation Track Meet in Binghamton, NY, competing among the best in all New York State public, parochial and independent schools. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted, “Coached by **Peter Prince**, Newcomb has developed into one of the most decorated runners on the local private school scene in the last three years.

Jesse Klausz, learning specialist and history teacher, was selected to attend a **Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History Summer Seminar for Teachers**. He will be studying “The Age of Lincoln” at St. Catherine’s College, Oxford University.



At the **Lab High School Model UN Conference** held this spring, **Benjamin Waldman '11** won Best Delegate while representing the Democratic Republic of Korea on the Future Crisis Committee: Extraterrestrial Activity. **Abraham Axler '13** won Best Delegate on the International Atomic Energy Agency while representing France. **Miriam Gentile '11** received a verbal commendation for her work on the Economic and Social Committee. *Congratulations!*



Middle School Head **Joan Rappaport** agreed with that summation. “He urged us to get our faculty out there,” she said, “and he gave us a fairly big budget for it.” Last summer, Middle School teachers **Tony Soll**, **Ticia Vreeland** and history department chair **Ed Herzman** received a grant to develop an internal website to serve as a lesson plan database for the geography curriculum. Dance teacher/advisor **Jesse Phillips-Fein** and fifth grade teacher **Laurice Hwang** also used grants to develop an anti-bullying curriculum.

“**Fanny Sosenke** has done a tremendous amount of work with the math department,” added Joan. “She regularly leads workshops at a number of conferences, most recently at the NYSAIS Technology Workshop held right here at BFS.” Joan also pointed to the Writing and Style Guide for 7th and 8th grade students created by English teacher **Rachel Mazor** and former teacher Hope Blosser. “That was published a few years ago and is still given to students as a research and writing tool.” She’s very proud, too, that middle school teachers **Michael Kabot** and **Jesse Klausz** have received competitive grants for professional study this summer, Michael in Italy, and Jesse at Oxford University in England.

Preschool Head **Karen Luks**, who has served at BFS through the tenures of five heads of school, gave much credit to Michael Nill for reinstating a commitment to professional development at the school. “I applaud his efforts. Professional development is a part of life in our division. Several preschool teachers will be attending the Infancy Institute at Bank Street College of Education this summer, and many of our teachers have been involved in diversity work at the NAIS People of Color Conferences and Undoing Racism workshops; what’s more, they have spoken about these experiences with the broader BFS teaching community.”

Why is professional development so important? Aren’t our faculty already professionally developed before they’re hired here? “We want teachers who are keeping up, following current trends,” explained Karen. Similar to Jackie and Diane in the Lower School, Karen cited new research in motor skills development and her teachers’ ongoing successes at staying informed in this area. “Schools in general are asking students to write sooner, to hold a pencil sooner.”

Schoolwide, BFS holds two Professional Development Days a year, which usually involve inviting an educational expert and speaker to lead workshops for the faculty on a variety of topics ranging from diversity to gender to bullying to putting Quaker values into action in the classroom. In the 2009-10 school year, faculty from preschool through grade 4 worked with **Paula Lawrence Wehmiller**, a noted educator, sojourner, and story-teller, about the vocation of teaching; they also had inservice training on strategies for teaching boys. Middle and upper school teachers had two days of training in “Understanding by Design,” a process that begins with identifying the desired results and then “working backwards” to develop instruction, as opposed to the traditional approach of defining the curricular topics need to be covered.

“Professional development nurtures teachers and affirms our commitment to why we do what we do,” said Karen. But it doesn’t end there. “There are many ways that teachers and staff keep on learning all year long – it’s really who we are – teachers *and* life-long learners.”

Michael Nill himself has often been heard putting it in perhaps the most succinct terms: “Education is a process, not a product.”

– Jeffrey Stanley

AROUND THE SCHOOL

PRESCHOOL

On Sunday, April 25th, resident rock star and middle school teacher **Tony Soll** presented the 23rd annual **Dinosaurs, Dolphins, and Friends Concert** in the BFS Meeting House to an audience of enthusiastic children and their appreciative parents. Tony was joined on stage by Latin teacher/harmonica master "**Dr. Steve**" **Wortman**, **Kirk Pearson** on cello, mandolin, and xylophone (among other instruments), and several professional musicians. This crew brought the house down with their renditions of such popular tunes as "I Will Be Your Friend," "The Dolphin Song," and "The Cat Came Back." Preschoolers clapped, jumped, and waved along to "If You're Happy and You Know It," and joined in the hand motions for "Rattlin' Bog." Behind the scenes, preschool admissions director **Sara Soll** kept things running smoothly with the help of faculty, staff, and parent volunteers. A fundraiser for curricular programs, **this year's concert raised \$2,000 to support green initiatives** in BFS classrooms. On a dreary, wet Sunday afternoon, Tony and his band brought warmth and cheer to the BFS community. Here's to another 23 years of Dinosaurs, Dolphins, and Friends, Tony!

— Rachel Mazor

LOWER SCHOOL

"Come in. Come in. Find a spot on the rug where you can stretch out and get comfortable. Try to leave a little bit of room between you and your neighbors."

A quick look around the room, lit only by outside light, reveals an assortment of beautiful, primarily handmade, instruments arranged on an intricate

tapestry rug. Behind them hangs another colorful tapestry with hand carved rain sticks, didgeridoos and bagpipes, propped up against it. "Now close your eyes. And let the music take you on your own special journey," says the soft-spoken, amiable man in Indian-influenced clothing.

So begin the travels of our first and third graders when **Journeys With Sound** comes to visit. For nearly a decade now, **Darius Kaufmann**, a trained classical musician who performs on a wide variety of wind and percussion instruments, has come each year to invite our Lower Schoolers to let their imaginations run free as he and his equally talented colleague **Ron Pizzi** play the Aztec wind whistle, the crystal singing bowls, the deer-hoof rattle, and an array of lyrical Native American flutes. As the mesmerizing music fills the Lower School music room, Darius and Ron weave in information about cultural traditions and folklore from around the world.

"The Djembe (West African goat-skin drum) and Dumbek (a Middle-Eastern rhythmic drum) may be played. The Kanjira, a small snake-skinned drum from India, may be heard. A Native American eagle bone whistle, or Australian click sticks, or a Chinese gong may signal the end of each five-minute journey.

Opening their eyes, somewhat lulled by the rather hypnotic music, the children tell Darius where they've been and what they've seen. "I was flying on the back of an eagle. He took me up to the sun. But his wings were starting to get burned so he turned around and flew me down to another bird, who flew me down to another bird, until I was back on the ground."

"Wow," exclaims Darius,



"that's such a powerful image."

"I went down into the earth," begins another child, "and I saw a giant leopard that let me climb on his back."

"That's your power animal," Ron interjects. "The Native Americans believe that we each have an animal that protects us and gives us courage."

And so it continues with tales of risk and bravery and wonder. Nearly every child has a journey to share and Darius and Ron listen attentively, conveying a sense of awe and delight about each story. "Namaste," they saying bowing ever so slightly when the journeys must end. "The light in me honors the light in you," offers Darius. And out of the darkened room the children file, filled with the music and dreams that seem to light their steps.

— Diane Mackie

MIDDLE SCHOOL

"Three spice jars for five! I'll give you three jars for five!"

"Five? Are you crazy? I'll give you two dirhams."

"Ah, you're killing me here! This is the best cinnamon! Smell it!"

"Four dirhams. Final offer!"

"Deal!"

Once again this spring, the fifth floor was transformed into a souk as the sixth graders prac-



Students practice their bargaining and entrepreneurial skills at the annual sixth grade Middle Eastern bazaar.

ticed their bargaining skills at the Middle Eastern Bazaar. As the culmination of their study of the rise of Islam in the middle ages, the students made and sold products typically traded in covered markets along the **Silk Road**, including pillows, perfumes, salt, "gold" jewelry, and packets of exotic spices like cumin and turmeric. Some students prepared Middle Eastern treats like baklava, lassis, and hummus, while others offered henna tattoos or fortune-telling. The students (as well as some visiting teachers) received "dirhams" to spend in the bazaar, and after a quick lesson in haggling, they soon recreated the noisy, cramped, vibrant atmosphere familiar to anyone who has traveled to a souk.

Before immersing themselves in the happy chaos of the bazaar, the students enjoyed a delicious Middle Eastern meal prepared by **Chef Tom and his crew**. Sitting on rugs on the floors of their classrooms, sixth graders sampled shawarma, vegetable tagine, stuffed grape leaves, and couscous. They then moved the desks and set up their displays in two markets – the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul and the Old Bazaar in Damascus, also known as sixth grade classrooms – and took turns shopping and selling.

After a quick and efficient clean-up session, the students were then divided by gender for dance classes arranged by **Jesse Philips-Fein**. The boys worked with Egyptian dancer **Yasser Darwish** to learn the Debke, a folk dance that involved a lot of enthusiastic stamping and yelling “Opa!” The girls, meanwhile, learned belly dancing techniques with **Autumn Ward**. Both groups reconvened at the end of the lesson to share their new skills; then, upon request, the girls taught the boys a few of their favorite belly dance moves.

At the end of this exciting day, the students were worn-out but delighted, their lockers stuffed with construction-paper fezzes and leftover bags of Turkish delight, their hips swaying to echoes of the belly dancing music, and their heads filled with memories of their trip through time and space to a medieval bazaar.

– Rachel Mazor

UPPER SCHOOL

For four days in February, Dean of Students **Dori Dietz**, along with teachers **Sidney Bridges** and **Blake Sills**, joined me for an adventure of mega proportions. Our journey was to New Orleans. Our mission was to participate directly in service opportunities so that we could make plans for upcoming stu-

dent service trips to this great American city still recovering from Hurricane Katrina.

Many BFS students and families have gone to New Orleans independently to help rebuild; upon returning they have urged us to look into the possibility of a service trip. BFS faculty and Upper School students who attended the 2008 People of Color Conference, held in New Orleans, had already volunteered in the Lower Ninth Ward as part of the conference. That volunteer opportunity (in which both Sidney and I took part), further suggested that if we could find the ways and means, our entire Upper School community would benefit from a service trip of this proportion.

Seeing this as an excellent professional development opportunity, the four of us spent our time in New Orleans visiting potential living facilities and volunteering at both **Habitat for Humanity** and the **St. Bernard Project**. We met with and talked with residents in both the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish, heard their stories, and got down to the business of rebuilding homes. As Sidney reflects,

“While striking nails, sanding shingles, fitting floorboards and painting panels, and after listening to the poignant anecdotes of dedicated New Orleans rebuilders, we contemplated this promising horizon – how eagerly and dynamically our students and faculty would seize an opportunity to participate.”

The service opportunity we envisioned would not be just a means for us to carry out the BFS mission or complete service hours; it would allow our students and faculty to live in the destroyed districts, see the devastation first hand, listen to the stories of the residents and other volunteers, and further understand the importance of service.

During both of my visits to New Orleans, all that I had seen and learned moved me. I observed changes from one year to the next, but the progress in rebuilding these communities is slow. The devastation is evident and palpable. My second visit further underscored the need for us to plan and move forward. This was right time, the right place, and the perfect service opportunity for the Upper School.

“Our students’ emerging understanding of service is evident well beyond the arithmetic of hours provided,” Sidney observed. “It is evident in the students’ impatience to act and eagerness to shape a better world, to burst levees of indifference, cynicism, environmental violence, and sometimes misplaced notions of teenage self-absorption.”

Upon returning from the trip, Dori concluded it would be beneficial for a small group of students to help finalize the plans and experience the trip first hand, prior to taking an entire class. As part of their CAS (Creativity, Action and Service) project, four rising seniors have joined Dori in the planning and implementation of the trip. These students, along with Dori, teacher **Jon DeGraff** and eight additional students, will spend a week in New Orleans this summer, “living” the trip.

“This is another excellent way for our students to experience service intrinsically,” Dori said. “By participating in these service trips, our students continue to exemplify our mission and, more importantly, their amazing understanding about the importance of service in their lives.”

Through our own service work, we were able to immerse ourselves in the fiber of New Orleans and learned a great deal about the families living in the Lower Ninth Ward. As Sidney summarizes, “The structural and spiritual progress since Katrina bespeaks hopefulness; remarkable humane investment; personal resilience and sacrifice; creative environmental stewardship; and community building that New Orleans has shown.”

– Roxanne Zazzaro



From left, Roxanne Zazzaro, Blake Sills, Sidney Bridges, and Dori Dietz volunteering at a house that is being rebuilt through the St. Bernard Project.

➔ READ MORE about
Community Service at BFS online at
brooklynfriends.org/service

ALUMNI/AE CLASS NOTES

1940s

Niel Isbrandtsen Rising '43

writes, "I have six great-grandchildren with four more on the way. I plan to take a sea trip to the Baltic Seaports and Russia in August and September. Two of my children and their spouses and **Josie Secretan Taylor '45** are also going.

From **Nada Davies Barry '48**: "I'm off to a college-sponsored trip up the Mekong River from Vietnam to Cambodia. In June, I will go to Scotland for granddaughter Citizen Sigmund's graduation with an MA in International Relations from St. Andrew's University."

1960s

Ellen Dresdale Ritz '66 writes, "I live with my husband Len in East Williston, NY. Len is a real estate attorney in New York. Our daughter Michelle is studying psychology at Columbia University. This year I began working as a per diem nurse after a career that included Bellevue Hospital ER, the trauma unit, ICU and running clinics at Mt. Sinai Hospital. I am President of the East Williston School Board of Education and am on the Roslyn Hadassah board. In my spare time I also volunteer to do Breast Cancer Awareness for high school seniors and anti-bullying programs for kids of all ages. The caring about others was instilled at Friends. I remember these years with fondness and would love to see so many who were part of my growing up years."

1970s

Joe Ritter '75 wrote in late April that he is "back in Iceland, doing my second artist residency. I just photographed the volcano and I am going to Berlin in June to shoot the ballet, and

then Finland. In some of my latest work, I discovered a technique of shooting hand-dyed silk, revealing a latent image in the silk that only the camera sees."

From **Cornelius Foote '77**: "It's been a busy year. I'm a senior lecturer of journalism – particularly multimedia storytelling – at the University of North Texas' Mayborn School of Journalism; running my own media strategy and public relations firm with media personality and philanthropist Tom Joyner as one of my top clients; serving as publisher of the Dallas edition of *Girlfriends Health Guide for Women of Color* and in the midst of relaunching PoliticsInColor.com, a website providing opinion and commentary on politics from a multicultural perspective. Family is doing great. My daughter is a soon-to-be high school senior! My how time flies!"

Abigail Meisel '78 writes, "I'm living in a wonderful section of Washington Heights and running my own business doing PR and promotion, after working at Columbia Law School's Social Justice Program and writing a book for young adults. To my astonishment, my son, Nicholas, recently registered for his first SAT exam. I treasure my BFS education and taught my kid to take history notes using the Miss Magzarian method, but he's a math/science guy – equally astonishing to me. I was thrilled to see four BFS classmates this winter. Best wishes to those with whom I've yet to re-connect."

1980s

Maurice Coleman '85 was recently named one of the Tech Leaders in *Library Journal's* 2010 Movers & Shakers. This

April, for his success in training librarians throughout Maryland and beyond to use technology to enhance customer service.

Maurice also received the 2010 **Davis McCarn Technology Award** from the Citizens for Maryland Libraries at the 2010 Maryland Library Association. Maurice is a technical trainer with the Harford County Public Library in Belcamp, Maryland. Congratulations!

Congratulations also to **Brad Albert '86**, co-owner of **Rising Sun Solar** in Hawaii (with Matias Besasso), recently received a top honor from the U.S. Small Business Administration, being named Maui's 2010 Small Business Person of the Year. *Maui Weekly* reports that, upon receiving the award, Brad expressed gratitude to Rising Sun Solar's hardworking staff and added, "It is very gratifying to be recognized by the business community for years of hard work and faith that solar power can be a significant part of Hawaii's Clean Energy Goal." Noting the obstacle-ridden path that renewable energy has encountered across the nation, Brad added, "Our greatest challenge is to continue to work with HECO (Hawaiian Electric Company) and state and county lawmakers to keep grid access available and incentives in place."

Eco-friendly **Swing Salon**, owned by **Caroline Holley '86** and partner Luis Alfonso in Manhattan's East Village, has again been recognized for its commitment to the environment, this time featured in the *New York Daily News* as a local hair salon donating hair clippings for **Matter of Trust**, a non-profit creating hair mats for use in oil-spill clean-ups like those in the Gulf of Mexico. Swing

Salon is one of two US hair salons – and the only one in NYC – to be Green America Approved.

1990s

Andrew Guidone '94 received the 2010 **New York Emmy Award** for Educational Programming for "That's So New York: Henry Hudson's 400th Anniversary." Since 2007, Andrew has been a producer with NYC-TV/NYC Media Group, the official television network for the City of New York and affiliated City Agencies, producing the NYC-TV series "That's So New York," employment series "Job Hunt" and hour-long documentary special, "Blueprint: Parks of New York." Congratulations, Andrew!

Hannah Janal '99 writes, "I am starting my MFA degree in Film at Columbia University this fall. Alumni of the program include Kathryn Bigelow, the recent recipient and first woman to win an Oscar for Best Director."

2000s

Kyle Neptune '03 has been appointed an assistant coach at **Niagara University's men's basketball program** (Division I). After BFS, Kyle played four seasons of college basketball at Lehigh University, where he served as team captain in his senior year. For the past two years he has coordinated all the video scouting components of the Villanova basketball program, where, he says, he started to learn the business of coaching from the ground up.

Sarah Blakely '05 writes, "Hello from Japan! I will be in NYC in August when I have vacation time from working as an Assistant English teacher in

Nishi High School, Hamamatsu, and will visit BFS then, should anyone I know still be working that month! I owe so much to Brooklyn Friends teachers and staff, along with my sensei **Mie Makashima!** I continued my study of Japanese and East Asian Culture as a second major at Bryn Mawr, graduating in 2009. I love teaching and living in Japan! I recently traveled to Beijing over Chinese New Year, and for our winter break week, I went to Thailand. Why not? My best regards to all."

Faculty Alums

With much gratitude to **Jill Kneerim '56**, the Alumni/ae Office is delighted to be in touch again with **Esther Fasick** (English) and **Dr. Joseph Wiecha** (Spanish and Arithmetic).

A Special Request from Our Faculty Alums

Many of you know that the Alumni/ae Office truly enjoys forwarding your letters of appreciation to teachers who had a strong and positive impact on your lives. Most of our teachers prefer that the school forward your letters. We strongly encourage you to contact Susan in the Alumni/ae Office about teachers you would like to write to, even 50 years after they left BFS. Your kind words, years later, mean so much to your teachers and, in some cases, their families.

In Memoriam

The Alumni/ae Office will forward your letters of condolence.

Sharon Berman, mother of *Nina '97, Nerissa '99 and Haywood '02*

Paul Browner '48

Jane Hillenkoetter Saar '55

Barbara Schatzki, mother of *Michael '62 and Nick '68*



PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL REUNION *From left, Elliot Ames '67, Head of School Michael Nill, Jamila McRae Medley '95, Rebecca Soll '99, Mary Herzog '87, Doug Kyle '86, Camilla Church Greene '60, and Alumni/ae Director Susan Price '86*

A magical night, with wonderful people who simply inspire – thank you all again! Michael Nill and I traveled to **Philadelphia** in early April to host a dinner at Continental MidTown for area alums. BFS has given us all so much, but it was clear how much we all share because of BFS, regardless of graduation year. Meeting for the first time, it seemed as if we had all known each other for years. Looking forward to returning next year! – **Susan Price '86**

ALUM AUTHORS SPEAK AT NYU SYMPOSIUM

Authors **Francine Prose '64** and **Peter Trachtenberg '70** were two of the four featured literature panelists at **Between Hope & History: When Disaster Strikes**, an all-day symposium sponsored by **The New York Institute for the Humanities** and **The Institute for Public Knowledge** at New York University in March. It's not the first time, but it's always a wonderful moment when two of our accomplished alums are on the same panel. Most recently, Francine has written **Anne Frank: The Story, The Life and The Afterlife**, and Peter is the author of **The Book of Calamities: Five Questions About Suffering and Its Meaning**.



Peter Trachtenberg '70 (above) and Francine Prose '64 (at left)

GETTING INVOLVED

We strive to engage our alums, whether as class agents, speakers, volunteers, or through making BFS one of your philanthropic priorities. If you are interested in deepening your connection to BFS, would like to submit news for **Class Notes**, have questions, or want further information on alum activities at BFS, please contact:

Susan Price '86
Director of Alumni/ae
 375 Pearl Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11201
alum@brooklynfriends.org
 718.852.1029 ext. 208

CONNECT WITH BFS ON THE INTERNET



Brooklyn Friends School alums have a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, and our BFS website.



Please visit us often. Let's connect and get together online. The BFS website has a secure online directory, which you can join or update; more than 60 Alum Profiles of BFS graduates; archival photographs; contemporary photos; and information about BFS Alum Events, which are held throughout the year.

brooklynfriends.org/alumni

ALUMNI/AE PROFILE: DENA DOUGLAS '83

I was born and raised in Brooklyn. I lived in Crown Heights. I started Brooklyn Friends in kindergarten, so I'm a lifer. We moved to Lefferts Gardens when I was around nine years old." Dena Douglas '83 didn't require much effort to jar her memory and get the chronology leading up to her life as a BFS student just right. She can still remember her first day walking into BFS. "I liked it. I had the benefit of my older brothers (Brian '77 and Duane '81) having already started there," she said. "I remember my interview; not much, but I remember coming into the building at Pearl Street and going up to the 7th floor. I was very comfortable and happy."

Although she loved life at BFS, Dena soon became aware that she was in an unusual school. She gave a candid assessment: "It was the early 1970s and the times were changing and the school was trying to formulate its place in those changing times," she said. "From an educational perspective it wasn't really a traditional academic setting, so that was a little unsettling."

In those days the school's curriculum was particularly progressive and experimental by today's standards. "In Lower School, where most of my friends and cousins [outside of BFS] were getting homework, I was getting teased for not having it," she recounted with some amusement. "Well, not teased. Let's say they were confused. But in the end they saw that I was getting a good education."

Today Dena is a **Kings County Civil Court Judge** and is married with two children, one of whom is a current BFS student. "And I still live in our family home," she said. Her mother still lives there, too. "I am very lucky," she said of her mom. "She was an educator and worked for the Board of Education. She was educated in New York's public school system herself and wanted to explore other options. So that's



Dena Douglas '83 – an elected judge, an alumna, and a BFS parent – received the 2010 George Fox Award at Commencement.

how we all wound up at Brooklyn Friends."

As has often been the case with alums from that nearly mythical golden age in BFS' history, she particularly recalled teacher **Jennifer Knies**, today the school's Director of Admissions. "She was very committed to her teaching and her students." Dena also remembered her friendship with her third grade teacher **Debbie Constable**. "She was terrific. She took me under her wing, and she used to let me go with her to make deposits at the bank. It seems strange now, but even that experience helped shape me in some ways, seeing the world of adults and professionals outside of the school environment."

In those days Quaker Meeting wasn't a weekly affair but a daily activity, even in the Lower School. "We had morning meeting every day. It was not my favorite," she admitted, "but the Quaker principles help me now, even in my home. My family and I have a peaceful nature, we're nonconfrontational and we come to resolutions together in the household."

In the Upper School Dena found guidance from teacher **Don Knies**. "He helped us develop in terms of college preparedness," she said. "We were non-traditional students having to apply to a lot of academically traditional schools, and we needed good teachers to help us cross over."

It worked. Dena attended Northwestern University as an undergraduate. She was still undecided about her future, but finally settled on the pursuit of a legal career. "My dad was an attorney but my parents didn't pressure me," she said. "He was active in the community and in the Bar Association, so I grew up immersed in the legal profession, but it was my decision to go into law."

She attended St. John's University School of Law, and after passing the bar became an Assistant DA in Brooklyn. "The District Attorney's office is near BFS," she pointed out. After 12 years in the DA's office she became a Federal Prosecutor and moved to Washington, DC for three years.

After that relatively short stint away from home she returned to her roots and ran for Civil Court Judge in Brooklyn, an elected position which she won in 2007. "Some of my colleagues from BFS helped me out tremendously," she said. "One family whose house I was in many times growing up held

a big fundraiser for me at their home and invited other BFS families. It was incredible." She is assigned often to preside over cases in Brooklyn Criminal Court, which is not far from BFS. "Most of my life has happened within a four block radius in downtown Brooklyn."

As a judge and an elected official there is only so much Dena can discuss about her work, but she will describe herself as someone with a passion for children and those with special needs. "People come into our court for a number of reasons, but they're usually at a crossroads in their lives," she said. "I want to make sure they're not treated as a number. Brooklyn Friends has a lot to do with this attitude that a person goes beyond what you see before you, that there are many different people, and you can't judge them based on what they look like."

Dena is also a devoted mother who enjoys exploring New York City's art and theater offerings with her son and daughter. "I like them to learn outside of the school environment," she said. Both children are good at sports just like their mother was in her day, but she's also proud that they have an artistic side that she nurtures at every opportunity. "I like enjoying art, but they like making it," she quipped. "We go to the art supply store and I let them pick out what medium they want to work in next."

Dena remains passionate about BFS and has spoken here on a number of occasions about history and civic engagement. Most recently, she addressed the Class of 2010 when she was presented with the **George Fox Distinguished Alumna Award** at Commencement Exercises on June 10. — Jeffrey Stanley

A Glorious Evening, An Extraordinary Event

by Karen Edelman

This year's gala on April 30 was truly an extraordinary event. Four hundred fifty members of the extended BFS community turned out to celebrate Michael Nill and the tremendous growth he has shepherded in his 15 years at Brooklyn Friends. A glorious evening at Stage 6-Steiner Studios was the setting for our event. Guests perused our silent auction and there was much excitement over our new electronic bidding system, BidPal. This hi-tech system encouraged people to keep bidding – even as they took their drinks outside to enjoy remarkable views of Brooklyn and Manhattan!



Once the guests were assembled at their dinner tables, a touching tribute video produced by parents **Jonathan and Christy Sheehan** was presented – a compilation of messages, thoughts and songs from faculty members to Michael. **Toukie Smith**, PAT Co-President, **Alice Pope**, Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees, and **Dana Cook Stone '76**, Honorary Alum Chair of the event, all spoke of Michael's remarkable dedication to BFS. The Gala's Honorary Parent Chair, **Robert De Niro**, sent a warm-hearted video greeting from the Tribeca Film Festival. Dana discussed Michael's commitment to scholarly pursuits – and therefore felt it appropriate to announce that she and her husband Andrew had made a contribution to the school to name the third floor BFS library "The Michael Nill Library."

Michael spoke about his love for Brooklyn Friends, and presented three pieces of advice that he wanted the community to continue to make a priority moving forward.

Our values: It is not what we teach to our students, but how we teach it. Quaker values is what makes us unique – that our students are learning with a purpose.

Strong academics, preschool through 12th grade: A Brooklyn Friends education is truly complete when the educational process begins at a young age and goes through high school. This piece has been moving in the right direction in the last several years; next year, 37% of the graduating

class will be "lifers."

Voluntary Giving: Michael impressed upon the gathering that BFS is behind other independent schools in our level of voluntary giving and that to be a truly great school we need to improve on this.

After a standing ovation for Michael, **Lisa Sack** (photo above), M.C. for the evening, built upon Michael's words and asked that the community support **The Michael Nill Endowment Fund for Faculty Development**. Using their BidPal devices, we watched live on the big screen as the numbers climbed to an impressive \$45,000 for the fund!

Overall the night was a huge success, raising \$130,000 for The Michael Nill Endowment Fund for Faculty Development.

Photos by Gregg Martin. Please see next page for more photos



All photos, left to right:

1. Michael Nill with his wife, Irene Cohen, Preschool Head Karen Luks, Allan Luks
2. Mary Cole, Meredith Cole Southern '95
3. Parents Tanya Ferran Loreto, Jamie Nesbitt-Weber
4. Parents Dara Sicherman, Pamela Kiernan, Philip Graham '87
5. Trustees Wade Black '92, Nicole Bernheimer, Ninon Rogers



BROOKLYN FRIENDS SCHOOL
375 Pearl Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Presorted Standard
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Permit # 79
 S. Hackensack, NJ

The Newsletter is published five times a year for BFS families, faculty, alumni/ae, and friends.

Joan Martin, Editor

718.852.1029
brooklynfriends.org



SPRING GALA 2010

All photos, from left: **1.** Kenneth Adams '78, Diana Adams and Susan Antoniou; **2.** Dana Cook Stone '76, Alice Pope, Paul Segal'62, Ross Levin; **3.** Fiona Forward, Toukie A. Smith; **4.** Salome Galib, Christine Agro (Event Co-chairs); **5.** Nancy Black, Michael Black, Sharon Kennedy, Sarah Swearer; **6.** Linda Villamarin, Orinthia Swindell, Tonia Gustafson, Claudia Lewis, Amy Brogan; **7.** Tony Gentile, Fern Finkel Gentile, Hildemarie and Alex Ladouceur; **8.** Neil Botwin, Angela Menziuso and Jill and Todd Rose.



Please go online to see additional photos:
brooklynfriends.org/springbenefit