

# NEWSLETTER

Volume IV, No. III January/February 2008

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2008

The Brooklyn Friends School Committee has published a **Strategic Plan** to guide the school over the next three to five years. Highlights of the Plan include increasing the size of the school by adding a class per grade over the next 12 years; retaining and increasing the diversity of students, faculty and staff, including reaffirming our economic diversity; and enhancing the school's Quaker life and its commitment to community service. The School is actively looking for a permanent home to replace the upper school's rented space and to accommodate the anticipated growth.

"The School is well-positioned to achieve these goals," said School Clerk Benjamin Warnke and Head of School Michael Nill in introducing the Plan. "Our financial condition is sound; the administrative team is seasoned and respected; we have successfully implemented the International Baccalaureate Diploma program; and the number of new families interested in the school continues to grow every year, in every division."

The Strategic Plan has been distributed to all BFS families and alumni/ae and may be downloaded from [brooklynfriends.org](http://brooklynfriends.org).

**Brooklyn Friends School**  
375 Pearl Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718 852 1029  
[brooklynfriends.org](http://brooklynfriends.org)

## Taking It to the Top: When Science Meets Technology

Stop-motion photography, film animation, and desktop publishing have supercharged the science and technology curricula for BFS third and fourth graders this fall, under the inspired teaching and collaboration of teachers **Megan Dunphy Gottlieb** and **Lesley Yeo**.

As the new full-time science and technology specialist teachers in the lower school this year, Megan and Lesley say they seized "the perfect time and opportunity" to explore collaborations and connections between the content covered in the science lab and the skills that students develop in computer literacy classes. During a discussion at the start of the year, the teachers identified two units where the collaboration seemed "particularly rich, organic, and relevant to the students' learning."

In third grade science, a botany unit that covers everything from plant morphology and photosynthesis to species identification and classification is a major component of the curriculum. As part of this study, the students took a trip to Fort Greene Park to practice identifying trees based on information found in published field guides. Meanwhile, in computer literacy class, the children were learning basic digital photography skills and how to incorporate photographs into text documents. Since published field guides often represent a broad geographical area and are not written in age-appropriate language, Megan and Lesley decided to have the students create their own field guides for the park using the knowledge they gained both in the science lab and computer literacy.

At Fort Greene Park, the students shared digital cameras in small groups and photographed specific

trees that were of special interest to them. They also took written notes about the trees they chose. Back in school, students worked in groups to research the different species they had selected, both in books and on the Internet. They also completed science diagrams that showed characteristics of each tree's leaves. The project concluded with students putting together their writing, photographs, and diagrams to create their own publication of "Field Guide to Trees in Fort Greene Park."

entific terms to describe river features and built models that demonstrated the distinctive ways in which rivers cut through land over time. The students had worked for many hours to create their classroom river models, and Lesley and Megan were confident that they had the ability to demonstrate their newfound knowledge in another visual medium.

The students were very aware that the changes they observed in their river models offered proof of the ways that rivers change over



A group of fourth graders working in the media lab on their animated films for their river-cutters curriculum.

It is a long-standing fourth grade tradition to study river ecosystems as part of the science and geography curriculum. In previous years, students wrote a book to describe various river features and the concepts of erosion, watershed, geological sequencing, and humans' impact on rivers. This project helped the children synthesize their learning and develop word processing skills.

"This year, we wanted to give students an opportunity to express their learning in a different medium," explained Megan and Lesley. In the science lab, students learned the sci-

thousands of years. This led to the concept of time-lapse photography, and in turn, to animation. The teachers decided upon a stop motion animation project that would allow students to work collaboratively and give them an accessible introduction to the principles of animation. In computer literacy, students learned how stop-motion animation movies are created and filmed practice movies to hone their skills.

Megan and Lesley then identified the questions that students would be expected to answer with an animated

continued on page 3

## Message from Head of School Michael Nill

**W**hile the main purpose for integrating the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program into our Upper School was to further strong academics and global education, I am delighted to report that it has been at least partially responsible for another exciting development: the notable growth we are seeing in applications from international families. The changing demographics of Brooklyn and the increased overall interest in the school are other factors. In time, an increase of families with multi-national perspectives will surely and significantly enhance the cultural richness of our existing community.

Among the countries represented by applicant families are Canada, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, England, France, Granada, Guyana, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and Trinidad. Because of their parents' passionate commitment to keep their families connected to their respective cultures, many of the prospective students are multilingual. A number of the prospective parents and siblings have received IB diplomas from schools abroad.

Sometimes the stories of what brings them to apply to Brooklyn Friends can be quite poignant. One of the three applicant families from South Africa had a history of outspoken and what was deemed trai-



torious opposition to apartheid, opposition that led to such restrictions and repercussions that the family eventually felt driven for reasons of personal safety to leave for the United States. As the family tells it, coming to BFS brought back childhood memories of these struggles as they heard me talk about peaceful resolution of conflict and other Quaker values and about how the confluence of academics, the arts and service can create fulfilled adults who choose wisely and act when action is needed. Given their history, they understood why this kind of education and training are important for children.

Our students will of course benefit by increased presence of students from international families just by hearing about experiences elsewhere. But the benefit and importance go much beyond that, and touches on the same kind of benefit we expect from the school's racial and ethnic diversity.

Sid Ganesan's life speaks eloquently to this. He came to Brooklyn Friends this year to teach IB and advanced biology and oversee the IB

Creativity, Action, and Service requirement. His family left the small post-colonial island nation of Sri Lanka in the late 70s for Hong Kong, another island and one of the last remaining British vestiges in Asia. At the age of 13, Sid left Hong Kong to come to an independent school here in the United States. As he tells it, a great deal of his life has been consumed negotiating his ethnic Sri Lankan Tamil and cultural Hindu heritage with a diversity of eastern and western individuals, groups, and environments. This has led to a deep conviction that knowledge, compassion, and multicultural understanding are vitally important in resolving seemingly insurmountable differences.

As Sid sees it, and I agree, many of our students will live the kind of transcontinental life he has experienced. This means that they must learn to see the intrinsic value of diversity, as well as develop the multicultural understanding and skills that will allow them to be able to work and live alongside those who are culturally different. A growth in the number of students from international families will help all our students achieve that.

In celebrating 140 years of the school and 100 years of the upper school this year, we can see how the power of our Quaker mission remains ever vital and relevant despite such significant demographic changes in the school and surrounding communities.

*Michael*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**February 8 6:30 pm**  
**PAT African-American Celebration: The Harlem Renaissance. Buffet dinner followed by a swing dance performance in the meetinghouse/theater.**

**February 13 9 am**  
**PAT Speaker Series**  
**Susan Gregory Thomas and Mary Rothschild on "Healthy Media Choices"**



**February 20 8 am**  
**"The Fundamentals of Estate Planning," a seminar with alumnus Richard Cutler '62, Esq.**  
*Registration required.*  
*Telephone 718-852-1029 ext. 208. The seminar will be repeated on April 17, 2008 at 8:00 a.m.*

**March 6, 7, 8**  
**Annual Dance Concert**

**March 10**  
**Alum Regional Reunion in Florida**

**March 17-28**  
**Spring Break, No school**

Check the BFS website for details and updates on all school events:

[www.brooklynfriends.org](http://www.brooklynfriends.org)



**Come celebrate 140 years of Brooklyn Friends and 100 years of the Upper School at our Annual Spring Benefit on Friday evening, May 2, 2008. This year we will commemorate our long history in Brooklyn at the Tobacco Warehouse in DUMBO, directly beneath the Brooklyn Bridge. Great Food, Great Friends, Live Auction, Silent Auction, Music and Dancing – This is an evening you will not want to miss!**

## Supercharging Science and Technology

continued from page 1

movie, such as “What is an island and how does it form?” and “How does pollution affect a river?” Using science and computer class periods, students were presented with the questions and worked together in groups of three or four to come up with relevant information that would help them draw their storyboards. Their information was fact-checked, and they were encouraged to think about their answers in terms of sequential steps and how they would show these steps visually instead of just telling about them. After this pre-production process, the students spent several class periods creating their final movies. It was a splendid project that the students – and their teachers – thoroughly enjoyed.

Third graders researching trees and plant life at Fort Greene Park (top right) and in the media lab (below). Fourth graders preparing storyboards for their animated film on their river-cutters science curriculum (right).



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Literary Laurels

Brooklyn Friends School's two literary magazines, the middle school's *Scribe* and the upper school's *Wordflirt*, have been recognized as silver medal winners in the national Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) critique and competition. Publications are judged by print-industry professionals on writing and editing, design, concept, photography, art, and graphics. Founded at Columbia University in 1925, the CSPA sponsors annual student journalism conferences and serves student journalists and their advisers, recognizing that student writing can be a means towards broader understanding of society and people. Hope Blosser is the advisor of *Scribe* and Sidney Bridges advises *Wordflirt*. Congratulations to Hope, Sidney and the many students who earned this recognition.

### Good News Comes Early

This year, eight BFS seniors were admitted to their top-choice colleges through Early Decision programs. Those happy students will be attending: Barnard College, Brown University, Cornell University, Elon University, Franklin and Marshall College, Hampshire College, Haverford College, and Skidmore College. Good news has also begun rolling in for a number of other students, who so far have received acceptances from: Bard College (4 students), Drexel University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Georgetown University, McDaniel College, New England College, Stony Brook University, University of Chicago, University of Louisville, University of Redlands, and Ursinus College. Congratulations seniors!

## Words (and Letters) To Live By

The BFS Development Office has been offered an exciting challenge to raise additional funds for the 2008 Brooklyn Friends Fund, and we need everyone's help!

In mid-February many of you will receive a letter with a list composed of you and four other members of the BFS community. For each letter that makes its way back to Brooklyn Friends, the Brooklyn Friends Fund will receive a \$500 bonus. Are there strings attached? Absolutely! Here's how it will work.

- 1) One member of the BFS community will receive a small package in the mail.
- 2) The recipient will need to fill in a short (one sentence) statement about what Brooklyn Friends means to them (or their children).
- 3) The first person on the list will send the letter on to the next BFS

community member on the list (using the enclosed addressed envelope).

4) The cycle starts over again until the fifth person on the list sends the letter back to BFS.

5) Once the completed letter arrives back in the Development Office, the Brooklyn Friends Fund receives a \$500 bonus for every letter returned.

Sounds simple, right? It is! There's one more catch. When the letter arrives back at BFS, *every one of the five people on the list should have made a contribution to the 2007-2008 Brooklyn Friends Fund.*

All of the comments on the letters will be compiled and published as part of our celebration of the upper school centennial and 140 years of Brooklyn Friends. So keep an eye on the mail and make sure to act right away. **THANK YOU!**

## AROUND THE SCHOOL

### Preschool

Holidays in the United States and around the world were explored in a meaningful way in the Preschool this December when the Green and Orange Rooms (4 and 5 year olds) held their annual “International Toy Museum.”

The museum is a temporary exhibit set up in the Orange Room classroom, which becomes a showcase of children’s toys and artifacts from around the globe. This class project is accompanied by engaging classroom activities during the weeks leading up to the BFS winter vacation. Parents take part in the activities by coming into their children’s classroom to sing a song, read a story, share something special pertaining to the holidays, or talk about family traditions.

We hold the toy museum at this time of the year because the children learn about celebrations around the world and include those that are celebrated with their families. These include Diwali (from India), Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah and Three Kings (South America and France), among others. It helps the children become aware that there are special days and festivals of light all over the world. The children notice that can-

dles and lights are part of many winter holidays. Teachers talk about ancient beliefs and also about the Quaker belief that people have light within and this helps us brighten dark days.

As part of this curricular unit, Orange Room teachers Maura Eden and Camille Fobbs and Green Room teachers Sharon Carter and Robin Stewart turn out the classroom lights and tell stories by candlelight, then discuss how tales can be told without picture books. They point out to the children that for years people passed on stories in this very way. Storytelling is a dying art for many of us, and the children absolutely love it.

The teachers also talk about how many holidays have a gift sharing aspect, which often means toys for children. That’s where the toy museum comes in. The exhibit includes not only handmade playthings from around the world but costumes and instruments as well. Many BFS parents get involved in creating the museum, sharing songs from their home countries and lending toys and artifacts to the hands-on display. The activities culminate in each child choosing a favorite toy to draw and display on their classroom bulletin boards.

**Karen Luks**  
Head of Preschool



Parents and children looking at Peach Village (top) and the drawings first graders completed using photos they took on neighborhood walks (above).

### Lower School

The urban planners of tomorrow (otherwise known as BFS first graders) showed off their block neighborhoods to parents and friends in December. The two wooden cities, named “Peach Village” and “Funky Town,” were carefully constructed by the children within the space of two weeks; the mini-metropolises welcomed visitors to miniature versions of schools, parks, office towers, homes, and a slew of stores.

The first grade neighborhood study began with several walking trips to the busy and thriving Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights. The children were asked to make observations and answer the questions, “What is a neighborhood?” and “What does a neighborhood need?” They discussed and recorded the many people, places and things that they observed on their trips, and organized the list according to the type of needs they fill in the neighborhood, such as the need for food, for entertainment, for safety and security.

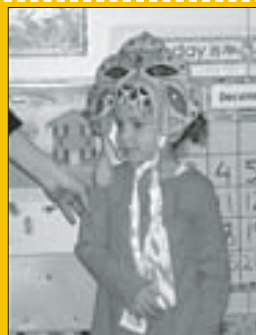
Also on their field trips, the children take digital photos of the

sites they observe. Back at school, they use the photos for a project in which they “draw out” from a central photographic image to create their own unique visions of a neighborhood.

Then it’s down to the business of building. Each student selects his or her own building or site to construct and name. Welcome to Leo’s Sushi Restaurant, Happy Paws Pet Store, Peach Village Park, Get Up and Go Gym, Chloe’s Book Store, Bow Wow Do Bowling Alley, So NY Bakery, and the Candy Drop.

The neighborhood study is an incredibly rich curriculum that combines social studies and language arts with mapping, math, and the best ingredients for learning – enthusiasm, team work, creativity, and fun. We are proud and appreciative of our first graders and their teachers, Laura Leopardo, Jill Fiengo, Anita Pahuja and Yumiko Higaki, for sharing their extraordinary neighborhood with us.

**Jackie Condie**  
Head of Lower School



Children, teachers and families took part in the Preschool Toy Museum in December, with teachers Maura Eden (top) and Sharon Carter (left) giving demonstrations of unique toys from around the world.

## Middle School

Middle schoolers are on the move at BFS in more ways than one this year. Field trips to the cultural, historical and artistic attractions of New York City make up an important part of the academic program. Our students see dance productions at BAM, visit the galleries of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and tour the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and the Cloisters, among other local trips; just recently, the eighth grade took a trip back in time when they visited the Lower East Side Tenement Museum at 97 Orchard Street on Dec. 14.

"Since we study American history from the Civil War until the end of World War II, the trip to the tenement museum connects with the curriculum in several different ways," said eighth grade advisor and history teacher Ed Herzman. There is a unit of study strictly on the New Immigration period, from the 1880s to World War I, a unit on the Gilded Age, 1877 to 1900, and a unit on the Progressive Reform era. "These units overlap to cover a similar theme," explained Ed. "In the period after Reconstruction, the United States grew in area, population, wealth and power at an astounding

rate. With this growth came a number of problems such as terrible living and working conditions for immigrants.

"Tenements were miserable places to live around the 1890s, when Jacob Riis wrote about them and took pictures of them for his book, *How The Other Half Lives*," Ed continued, "But as his book inspired reforms, conditions improved. I think the students got a visual understanding of that progression through this trip."

One half of the eighth grade group participated in the "Piecing It Together" tour and the other half the "Confino Family Living History" tour. Piecing It Together focused on the garment industry, and the group toured the homes of the Levine family, whose apartment functioned as a garment shop at the turn of the century, and the Rogarshevsky home, whose father worked outside the home as a garment worker and suffered an early death from tuberculosis. The Piecing It Together tour group also viewed a contemporary ten-minute film about garment manufacturing and labor abuses in Asia. This inspired the 8th graders to make overseas garment labor conditions a topic for their upcoming "Letters for Change" project.

"Because different sections of the museum represent different time periods, the students got a sense of the building with and without electricity, with and without plumbing, with and without ventilation," explained Ed. "We talked about it in class and many of the students were surprised at how 'nice' certain sections of the tenements were." Added trip chaperone Joan Martin, "The museum educators were excellent, and many of the students seemed to agree that it was a very worthwhile and inspiring trip. Topping it off with a trip to the local Starbucks was a huge plus."

**Joan Rappaport**  
Head of Middle School

## Upper School

The notion of learning French while watching a movie may seem a bit unusual and possibly non-academic. However, upper school French teacher Tracy Marie Bucci doesn't see it that way. Tracy has been piloting a new textbook this year in her French III class that uses a special film to introduce and reinforce the skills required for the level III course.

The new intermediate French textbook, *Bien vu, bien dit*, has been specifically designed to accompany the feature-length film, *Le Chemin du retour*. Set in various locations in France and in Morocco, the film tells an engaging story of a TV journalist and her quest for the truth about her grandfather's disappearance during World War II. As the journalist embarks on her journey she encounters a variety of people and cultures that show the diversity of France, the French, as well as the Moroccan culture. The film allows the students to hear a variety of accents and to gain confidence in their ability to understand authentic, spoken French.

Besides engaging students with an interesting storyline and compelling characters, the textbook chapters are constructed to support the corresponding episode of the film. It is from each episode that the vocabulary, grammar and cultural themes of each chapter flow.

According to Tracy, the textbook "supports the principles of a com-

municative approach to the teaching of foreign languages." She further explained that the film "seems to be one of the best pedagogical tools for this method of teaching."

Junior Kristen Schrijver says she likes the new textbook, adding that the structure and the way the lessons are introduced are very appealing. "Last year's textbook seemed too simplistic in comparison to *Bien vu, bien dit*," she added. "The use of the textbook with the film is more challenging, but I'm getting more out of learning French this year."



Teacher Tracy Marie Bucci with the new French textbook and its companion film in the background, which is projected on a Smartboard.

Fabian Kaupert, a sophomore, said that the use of the film has "allowed the class to explore the language in greater depth. The book and film are modern. The cultural lessons are current and up to date."

"I like the use of the film," shared sophomore Marlene Dominquez. "It allows us to hear and learn the other dialects of spoken French."

The textbook program is meant to motivate students and engage them in the study of French, challenging them and giving them the necessary linguistic tools so they can communicate their needs and interests. "The film presents to students the spoken language in a cultural context," Tracy points out. She sees this textbook and the film as a way for foreign language teachers to create "a dynamic and authentic atmosphere of stimulation or immersion in the French language and culture."

**Roxanne Zazzaro**  
Head of Upper School



The Lower East Side of New York has been called a "Gateway to America" because of the millions of immigrants who made their first homes there. Photo at left, the facade of the Tenement Museum, home to an estimated 7,000 people from more than 20 nations between 1863 and 1935; at right, the intersection of Orchard and Delancey Streets; and above, right, 8th graders enjoying an after-tour visit to Starbucks.

# ALUMNI/AE CLASS NOTES

by Susan Price '86

## 1940s

From Montana, **Pete Valentine '43** sends very best wishes to all for a splendid 2008.

**Sheldon Weeks '49** has had a very busy year. Sheldon continues to write for his local paper *Mmegi* in Botswana on film and on education. In fact, his four year old column with Dorcas Molefe and Owen Pansiri, "Issues in Education," will soon be published in book format by Pentagon Press. Sheldon is clerk of the Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting and is extremely active in a number of organizations. Sheldon wrote in his holiday letter of two projects that have received recognition for their excellent work within Botswana. "The two projects of the Kagisano Society – the Kagisong Centre and the Women's Shelter Project – have kept moving and have a definite future. Both serve a real need in very different ways. As Quaker collaborative activities with many other people, they remain at the cutting edge."

## 1950s

**Russell Kerr '51** writes, "I am enjoying my 16th year of retirement and I continue to work part-time in spring and fall as the Colonial Carpenter for the Suffolk County Archaeology Association in a local park."

## 1960s

**Judy Falk Cohen '66** has a new website, [www.judithcohendesign.com](http://www.judithcohendesign.com). Judy has had her own interior design firm for more than 20 years and her work has been featured in many national magazines.

Recently in touch with the Alumni Office, **Brian Stutt '66** is doing well, would like to reconnect

## STAY IN TOUCH

Please contact Susan Price '86, Director of Alumni/ae, with your news, your questions, and for further information on all alum activities:

[sprice@brooklynfriends.org](mailto:sprice@brooklynfriends.org) or 718-852-1029, ext. 208.

with old friends, and sends good wishes to all.

## 1970s

**Kitty Howard '77** writes from Nevada, "Thank you so much, BFS. I have been in touch with Christina Mata Ulrich '77, Erika Goldman '77, Shelley Tupper Friedman '77, Robert Johnson '75, Evan Thomas '74, Patrick O'Brien '76 and Jean Fink Nadick '76. It is great to have so many old friends."

## 1980s

Now teaching in India, **Pamela Douglas Reverman '82** writes, "I'm glad to be found and glad to know what is happening at BFS. We spend our summers in North Carolina, but I haven't lived in Brooklyn since I graduated and I haven't been back to New York even for a visit in at least six years. I was in the San Francisco Bay Area for 18 years before going overseas to teach in international schools, first in Morocco for six years. We've been in Mumbai since 2005."

Amy and **Bradley Albert '86** are happy to announce the birth of their son Tosh Cartier Albert (photo below) in November. Congratulations!



**Sam Rosenthal '86** continues to appear as the mentalist Sam Eaton in his show, *The Quantum Eye - Magic Deceptions*, now playing Saturdays at 5 at The Snapple Theatre in Manhattan. For a wonderful experience in magic and mind-reading, visit [www.thequantumeye.com](http://www.thequantumeye.com) and learn more.

As VP of Global Conservation Assistance, [www.GCAinfo.com](http://www.GCAinfo.com), **Jason Rodriguez '87** will travel to Malawi and Uganda in January to meet with two of GCA's board members, Malawi Minister of State Davies Katsonga and Uganda's Minister of Internal Affairs, Dr.

Ruhakana Rugunda. They will begin planning for a community center in Malawi that will focus on poverty reduction and ecosystem management and discuss the potential of similar projects in Uganda. Jason's blog will be accessible through GCA's website and he invites others who are interested in conservation, Africa, technology or building communities to contact him.

**Alexine Fleck '88** completed her Ph.D. in English at the University of Pennsylvania. She writes, "I dedicated my dissertation to the memory of Stephen Hara '86 and Ethan Frankel '89."

## 1990s

**Lee Morgenstern '90** lives in Miami and works as an Inclusion Specialist for the All Children's Together Project. "I advocate for children with disabilities to be included into programs that predominantly serve non-disabled children."

**Jesse Soll '95** had a full-page cover photo in the December issue of *Baseball America*.

**Julia Kennedy '96** is engaged to Karl Adam; they will be married in May 2008.

## 2000s

**Dahlia Freudenthal Dumont '02** and her husband Eric Dumont happily announce the birth in November of their daughter, Ayo Suzanne Freudenthal Dumont



(photo above). Congratulations!

**Edson Elcock '03**, a member of the Kansas City Wizards (Major League Soccer), returned to BFS as Assistant Coach for Varsity Basketball this year. Edson even stepped into Head Coach Vlad Malukoff's shoes while Vlad recovered from hip surgery (Vlad is doing well).

**Kira O'Brien '05** was in South Africa this summer, participating in

a special program at Rhodes University on leadership and developing non-governmental programs.

**Mary Hempel '06** enjoyed a great volleyball season at Sarah Lawrence this fall. In one game, she had 11 aces – one of the best performances in Sarah Lawrence history – and, during one stretch, Mary served 13 consecutive points. Mary was later recognized by the Hudson Valley Women's Athletic Conference as Volleyball Rookie of the Week.

**Special note:** The banner picture on page one of this newsletter is a photo of recent grads who returned to BFS on Jan. 8, 2008 for our annual Young Alum Visiting Day. The group had lunch in the cafeteria, met with teachers and friends, and had a question and answer session about college life with the junior class.

## IN MEMORIAM

Paul Stearns '38

John Laurent '42

Norman Marcle '40

Justus Pasternack '41

Aline Thayer Pickering '36

*The Alumni/ae Office is honored to forward notes of condolence to families.*

## ALUM EVENTS

**Wednesday, February 20** and **Thursday April 17:** Estate Planning Seminars with **Richard Cutler '62**, held at BFS, 8 a.m. Richard gives a terrific overview of estate planning, delves into some of its finer points, and readily answers your questions. Register with Susan Price, 718-852-1029 ext. 208.

**Monday, March 10:** Regional Reunion in Florida. Head of School **Michael Nill** and Alum Director **Susan Price '86** will host a dinner in the Fort Lauderdale area. Details will be sent to alums living in Florida, but all are welcome to join us.

**Saturday, May 3:** Alumni/ae Weekend at BFS. Our annual tradition, this year we will mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the upper school, and the Alum vs. Varsity game returns! Make sure to join the entire BFS community the night before (May 2) at our Spring Benefit as we celebrate not only the upper school's founding, but also 140 years of Brooklyn Friends.

## ALUM PROFILE: BETH BURNS PUNZI '82

by Jeffrey Stanley

**B**eth Burns Punzi '82 was born in Brooklyn and lived in Flatbush, in her mom's childhood home, when she entered third grade at BFS. Her sister Jacky Burns '83 began second grade the same year. Their parents, Alex and Maureen, had found out about the school through attending the Brooklyn Meeting; they were determined that their children would attend a school that encouraged personal expression and creative problem-solving.

"My parents loved those aspects about BFS, since that kind of thinking was discouraged when they were growing up. They wanted my sister and me to be in an environment where our opinions were valued, not dismissed." She remembers the sacrifices her parents made to send their daughters to an independent school, and the generous financial aid the school provided them.

Beth pushed herself academically, and was an active participant in the school community, spearheading student activities, volunteering with lower school children, and playing on sports teams. "I was strongly influenced by the wonderful teachers at BFS," she said. "Really, it was an exceptional teaching and administrative staff, and I owe a lot to the dedication and creativity so many of them brought to their work every day."

By the time Beth entered middle school the family had moved to

Boerum Hill to be closer to the school, and when Beth and her sister were in the upper school their mother Maureen had become the school nurse. Beth joined the Brooklyn Meeting when she turned 18, and entered Haverford College, a Quaker institution outside Philadelphia known as one of the country's most outstanding liberal arts colleges. She credits her admission to then-college counselor Don Knies, her strong teacher recommendations, and letters of support from members of the Brooklyn Meeting.

After graduating from Haverford with a BA in Political Science, Beth immediately joined the Peace Corps and was sent to Morocco to teach English in a rural high school. "This was a wonderful experience for me," she recalled.

Upon returning to New York she entered Baruch College's Masters of Public Administration program, while working as the program director for the Youth Services Opportunities Project (YSOP), a Quaker-founded nonprofit in which BFS upper school students participate. YSOP encourages engaged citizenship through direct service to homeless and hungry people.

Realizing that organizations struggle for funding, Beth decided she could help my moving into fundraising. She began work with the National Audubon Society, which gave her "an incredible grounding" in development. Beth was promoted twice in three years,

ultimately working on Major Gifts. She graduated Baruch in 1995, the same year her daughter Alaena was born. Beth and her husband Peter settled in New Jersey, where a new challenge awaited.

They soon had a son, Cole, who at the age of two was diagnosed with a learning disability requiring speech therapy. "The therapy was expensive but necessary, so I waited tables at night to pay for it and still be home during the day with him and my daughter." Today Cole is doing very well, but experience of finding help for her son had a residual impact on her.

"Everyone in my small town knows me as the mom who speaks up for children who learn differently," she said. "I am passionate about this because of my personal experience but I am able to effectively channel my passion because I was educated at a school dedicated to honoring each student's uniqueness and reaching that child's inner light."

Restaurant work had another impact on Beth. "I decided to take advantage of the experience and open my own business as a personal chef and caterer." She ran her catering business for five years, and also had a second son, Nico. By then she was ready to pursue her original career goal in nonprofit management. With three children, she also wanted to work near home and her children's schools. She found the perfect job in 2006 when she was hired by Big Brothers Big Sisters of



Monmouth County, just ten minutes from her home, as Director of Fund Development. "This has been such a wonderful position for me because I'm passionate about the cause, and I believe my skills are truly contributing to the organization's growth."

Today Beth and her sister remain members of Quaker Meetings in their respective New Jersey communities, and both were married in Quaker ceremonies. "We both incorporate Quaker values in our every day life and our parenting," she said. "We take very seriously our commitment to honesty and integrity in all that we pursue." Beth has been particularly active in helping the Shrewsbury Meeting raise funds to restore their historic Meeting House.

The recipient of the 2007 BFS Distinguished Alum Award for her leadership and public service, Beth had a word of advice to the current generation of BFS students: "Enjoy every minute you have left at BFS and soak up all the opportunities to explore your interests and pursue your ambitions. It gets a lot harder after BFS to do this."

### FRIENDS AT FIVE



A terrific group of alums participated in our first local networking event, "Friends at Five" at Trinity Place in the financial district on Oct. 26. From left, Kathryn Koos '85 and Ruth Calaman '84, Jamal Ballantyne '98 and Allan Maragh '98, and Nadia Block '84 and Peter Laughter '89.

## Creative Connection

# Playwright David Henry Hwang Visits with Upper School Theater Students

by Jeffrey Stanley

*"The person who wrote this crazy play, M. Butterfly – who is he?"*

Theater teacher and director Jeremy Richards was recounting his 9th and 10th grade students' reactions to David Henry Hwang's 1988 hit Broadway play and Pulitzer finalist, which they had just studied.

"They're young, and there's this issue in the play of a relationship, and a guy who lives as a woman, and how could the other guy not know, and all that. So when they met David in person, there was a sense of 'Wow, this is who he really is.'"

David, a BFS lower school parent, met with Jeremy's Introduction to Theater class on Nov. 2, a visit suggested by Admissions Director Jennifer Knies. "Jennifer let me know that David's new play *Yellow Face* was coming to the Public Theater this fall, and I took the opportunity to ask him to come in so my students could meet an award-winning playwright and see that writers are real people."

The students had developed formal questions for the playwright, but when the time came to ask them, their spontaneous questions were completely different. "He's a regular guy," said Jeremy. "He reminded me of a college student. He connected with the class in a fascinating way."

Dressed in black pants, his hair spiked, David was affable and laid-back. In answer to the first question, he said, "Writing is emotional and intuitive like falling in love, and you want to be with the person and can't stop thinking about it." He compared playwriting to music composition in terms of his rewrite process and focus on how the words sound. "The final piece of collaboration is seeing and hearing it before an audience and finding out whether it seems moving or funny, or whether the audience is bored or quiet."

David's musical analogy is based on experience. In his Los Angeles high school he was a violinist and didn't start writing plays until college. An English major at Stanford, he went on to the highly esteemed



Playwright David Henry Hwang (left) with theater teacher Jeremy Richards

Yale School of Drama.

"I write plays to figure out how I feel about things," he told the class. "And," he confessed, "I've had more flops than hits." He said such hard moments aren't so bad. "It's still exciting, challenging, interesting."

As for his desire to explore his real life feelings through theater, *Yellow Face* is an explicit example. The play, which takes its name from the showbiz practice of casting white actors in Asian roles, was stimulated by true events that occurred about 15 years ago. That's when *Miss Saigon* came to Broadway and David led a protest objecting to the casting of the Welsh, white actor Jonathan Pryce as a Eurasian in yellow face. In his play *Yellow Face*, the fictional protagonist

named DHH casts a Caucasian man named Marcus in a major Asian role in a play. DHH goes to great lengths to pass Marcus off as Asian-American, while Marcus exploits his newfound notoriety as an "Asian" star. Meanwhile DHH must contend with his father, an immigrant who built a banking business from the ground up and is now being investigated as a possible subversive with ties to Communist China. The play also features BFS alumnus Tony Torn '83 as the announcer and {Name Withheld on Advice of Counsel}.

As a follow-up to David's visit and their study of *M. Butterfly*, Jeremy's class read and discussed *Yellow Face* and saw it performed at the Public Theater. "We developed scenes, did set and costume designs, and used a study packet for from the Center Theatre Group that was so informative in terms of what it means to be an Asian American youth in the United States," said Jeremy.

After the play, David and some of the cast, including his wife Kathryn Layng, stayed for a talkback. "This was the culmination of the students' mid-term," said a grateful Jeremy. "It became a major project – and a great experience all around."

The Newsletter is published bimonthly by Brooklyn Friends School, a coeducational, college preparatory day school founded in 1867 by the Religious Society of Friends. Brooklyn Friends School is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and is accredited by the New York State Association of Independent Schools. BFS enrolls 635 students from preschool through grade 12 and publishes this newsletter for parents, alumni/faculty and friends of the school.

CLASS NOTES: Susan Price '86

WRITER: Jeffrey Stanley

EDITOR: Joan Martin

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008  
BROOKLYN FRIENDS  
SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



Address Service Requested

BROOKLYN FRIENDS SCHOOL  
375 Pearl Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201