



# REFLECTIONS

---

Summer 2020 | Volume 37 | Issue 2





# In This Issue:

- Page 2 A Note From the Head of School
- Page 4 Pivoting to Distance Learning
- Page 6 Arts & Electives: Connection is Perfection
- Page 8 Health & Wellness Team Keeps Our Community Saber Strong
- Page 12 Saber Updates
- Page 14 Saber Scenes



Cover and above: Class of 2020 received their diplomas during a socially distanced drive-in style ceremony. Left: Valedictorian Michael Poole gave an inspiring, heartfelt speech to his fellow classmates, their families, and faculty.

Back Cover: A legacy the senior class leaves behind is helping with the formation of the House System, including the creation of House banners. During an assembly, each senior drew an animal from a hat that would be their House animal. Then each House worked together to learn about that animal's attributes and came up with a banner and motto based on those attributes.

**SUMMER 2020 | VOLUME 37 | ISSUE 2**

Please direct questions or comments about this publication to [info@tncs.org](mailto:info@tncs.org) or 804.266.2494 x2229.



# A Note from the Head of School

Nancy Foy

As I reflect on this past semester here at TNCS, I am full of pride and gratitude. Who knew as we left school on Friday, March 13th, we would be having the final carpool of the academic year? After only two “snow days” to prepare, our teachers pivoted to teaching online the following Wednesday. I am so grateful for the partnerships among our whole community, working together to design the best possible distance learning program for our students. Our trustees, leadership team, faculty and staff, students, and parents each played a vital role in the success of our program. As we developed our program this spring we were guided by this formula: Mission + Culture + Data = Decisions. This continues to be my guide as we design the upcoming school year.

I am so very proud of our teachers for their dedication, resounding determination, and growth mindset. They quickly became skilled at distance learning and continued teaching and assessing new information. Because of our teachers, our students were engaged, learning, and connecting with their community all spring. Although we were not at school, our students were in school.

We knew it was imperative to attend to our students’ and faculty and staff members’ health and wellness. I am grateful to our health and wellness staff for the variety of offerings they led for our teachers and students in this area. From synchronous work outs, to the health and wellness website, to morning mindfulness, the social/emotional health of our community was of utmost importance. I loved that our parents and/or siblings could also take advantage of these offerings.

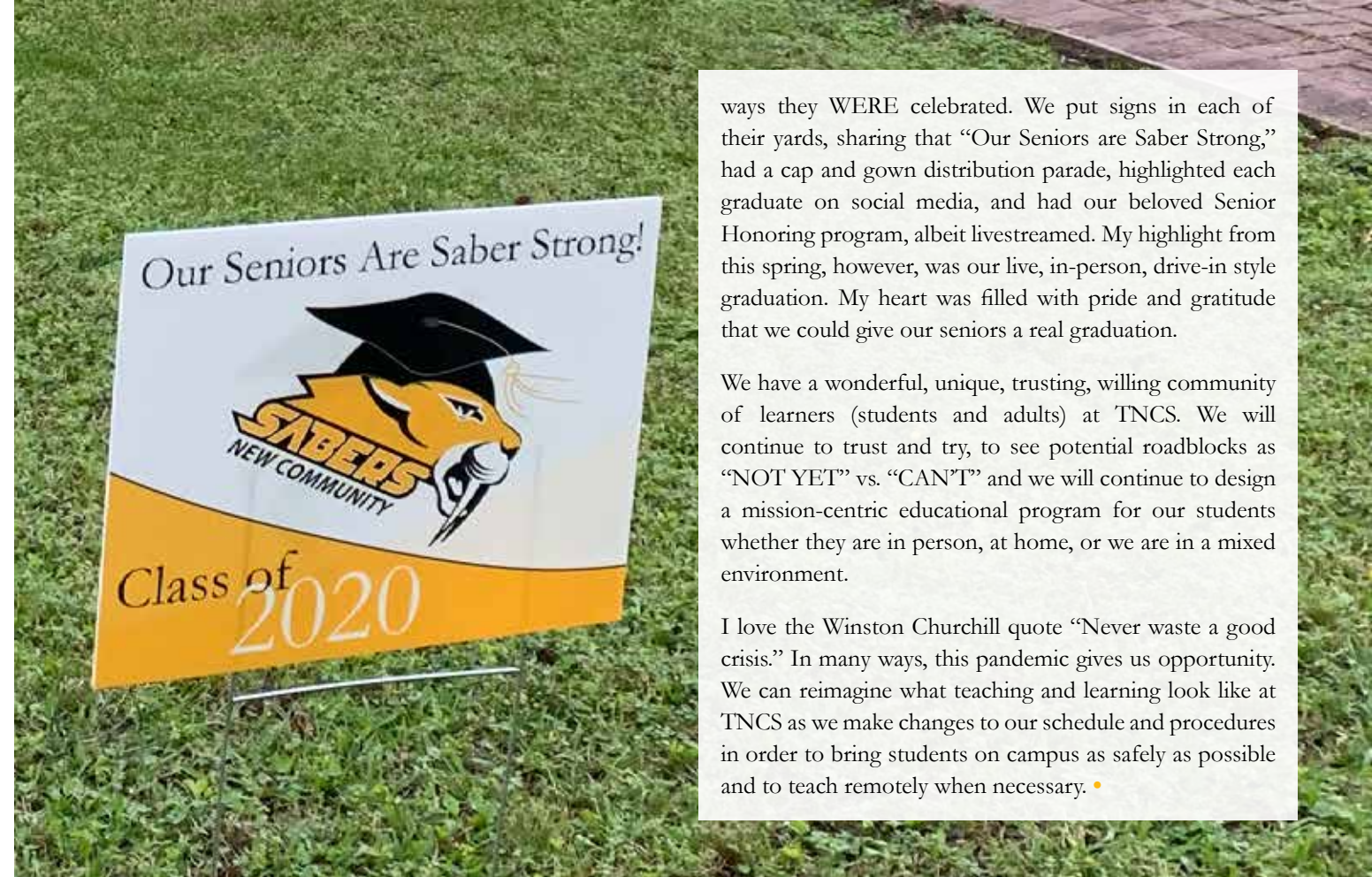
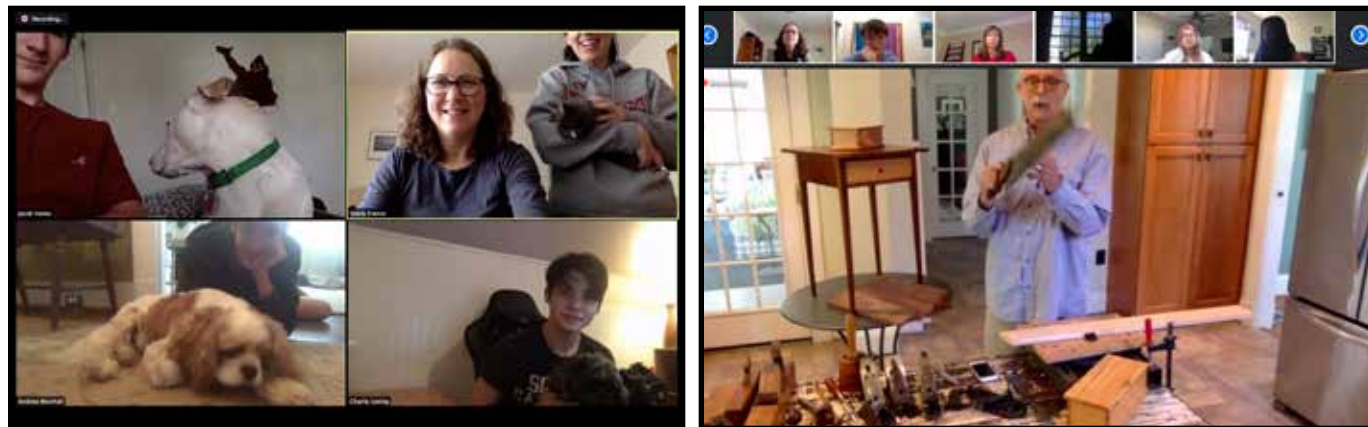
Our electives teachers reimagined how they could engage with our students. They created synchronous and asynchronous opportunities in art, drama, music, photography, and even woodworking! Their website was creative and important to our students so they could continue following their passions.

We worried about losing our strong sense of community, but our “Chief Engagement Officer” made sure that didn’t happen. From lunch bunches, to clubs, Freaky Friday house contests, and our fun Saber Spectacular, our community stayed strong.

None of this happened without an incredible amount of time, energy, and hard work. Again, I am proud and grateful to our amazing employees who were determined to deliver a quality distance learning program to our students.

I am equally proud of our students and their parents. “Trust and Try” was never more apparent than during the last nine weeks of this school year. Everyone was learning and adjusting to something new - a new technology, a new physical space to “do school,” and new expectations and challenges. Our students were “present” in every sense. Our attendance was almost 100% every day. Our students learned to set alarms, engage through a screen, and adjust to an every-other-day class schedule. They were amazing! Our parents were wonderful partners as we sailed in this uncharted water called school during the first pandemic in almost a century.

I could not be more proud of our senior class. Instead of focusing on what they were losing, they were grateful for the many



ways they WERE celebrated. We put signs in each of their yards, sharing that “Our Seniors are Saber Strong,” had a cap and gown distribution parade, highlighted each graduate on social media, and had our beloved Senior Honoring program, albeit livestreamed. My highlight from this spring, however, was our live, in-person, drive-in style graduation. My heart was filled with pride and gratitude that we could give our seniors a real graduation.

We have a wonderful, unique, trusting, willing community of learners (students and adults) at TNCS. We will continue to trust and try, to see potential roadblocks as “NOT YET” vs. “CAN’T” and we will continue to design a mission-centric educational program for our students whether they are in person, at home, or we are in a mixed environment.

I love the Winston Churchill quote “Never waste a good crisis.” In many ways, this pandemic gives us opportunity. We can reimagine what teaching and learning look like at TNCS as we make changes to our schedule and procedures in order to bring students on campus as safely as possible and to teach remotely when necessary. •



COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES: Bridgewater College, Butler University, Christopher Newport University, College of Charleston, Delaware Valley University\*, Elon University, Ferrum College, George Mason University, High Point University\*, Hofstra University, Hood College, James Madison University\*, John Tyler Community College\*, Landmark College, Longwood University, Marist College, Michigan State University, Old Dominion University, Radford University\*, Randolph-Macon College\*\*\*, Richard Bland College of William & Mary, Roanoke College\*, Saint Vincent College, Southside Virginia Community College\*\*, University of Lynchburg, University of Mary Washington\*, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University\*, Virginia Wesleyan University\*

\* attending





# Pivoting to Distance Learning

In early March it became clear that COVID-19 was likely to close schools, at least for a week or two. The TNCS Leadership Team began developing a distance learning plan (DLP) that would allow learning to continue until on-campus learning could resume. This comprehensive plan, developed in less than two weeks, laid out the philosophies behind our educational plan, a daily schedule, as well as the expectations for our students, faculty, and families.

TNCS's approach to distance learning began with the knowledge that the learning experiences teachers design when on campus cannot be simply replicated through distance learning. The way teachers teach and students learn had to be reimaged.

When developing the DLP, TNCS deliberately used the term "distance learning" rather than technology-specific labels such as "virtual learning," "e-learning," or "online classes." This choice reflects our conviction that quality learning can occur at a distance without solely relying on computers. Rather than being tied to an electronic device for their learning, TNCS's goal is for students to read, communicate, and engage in authentic learning experiences.

March 13th was the last day of on-campus instruction. At the time, it was hoped that this would only be for a couple of weeks. Students met with their teachers that Friday and were given instruction on what resources to bring home with them and how to access distance learning platforms through our Portals student management system.

On March 16th and 17th, classes were canceled as TNCS faculty met virtually to learn about distance learning technologies and plan for how to adjust their curriculum accordingly. On Wednesday, March 18th, distance learning at The New Community School began.

To support our students as they learned from home, the typical academic school day was divided into two halves, focused on core academic subjects, including Language Fundamentals, math, science, and history. The first half of the academic day would meet on odd numbered days, and the second half would meet on even.

We understood the importance of not having students stare at computer screens all day, so the schedule was designed to combine synchronous (all meeting together on Zoom) and asynchronous (working on your own) times. Additionally, extended "brain breaks" were built into the day, and students were encouraged to step away from electronic devices. Afternoons were devoted to asynchronous learning, when students could work independently or meet with teachers one-on-one to get extra help.

In the first weeks of distance learning, arts, electives, and health and wellness offerings were held back to allow students and faculty to focus on academics. As it became clear that distance learning was going to continue for the foreseeable future, these programs were added back during an afternoon "flex time." You can learn more about those programs on the following pages.

Our College and Career Counselor, Taryn Adkins, made sure that our upperclassmen were still moving forward with their post-graduation plans. She set up virtual meetings with students and their families, coordinated online visits with college representatives, and stayed up-to-date on the ever-changing plans for SAT testing. Ms. Adkins is working with our rising senior class this summer to give them additional SAT test preparation. Happily, a TNCS tradition continues: every member of the class of 2020 who wishes to attend college in the fall is doing so.

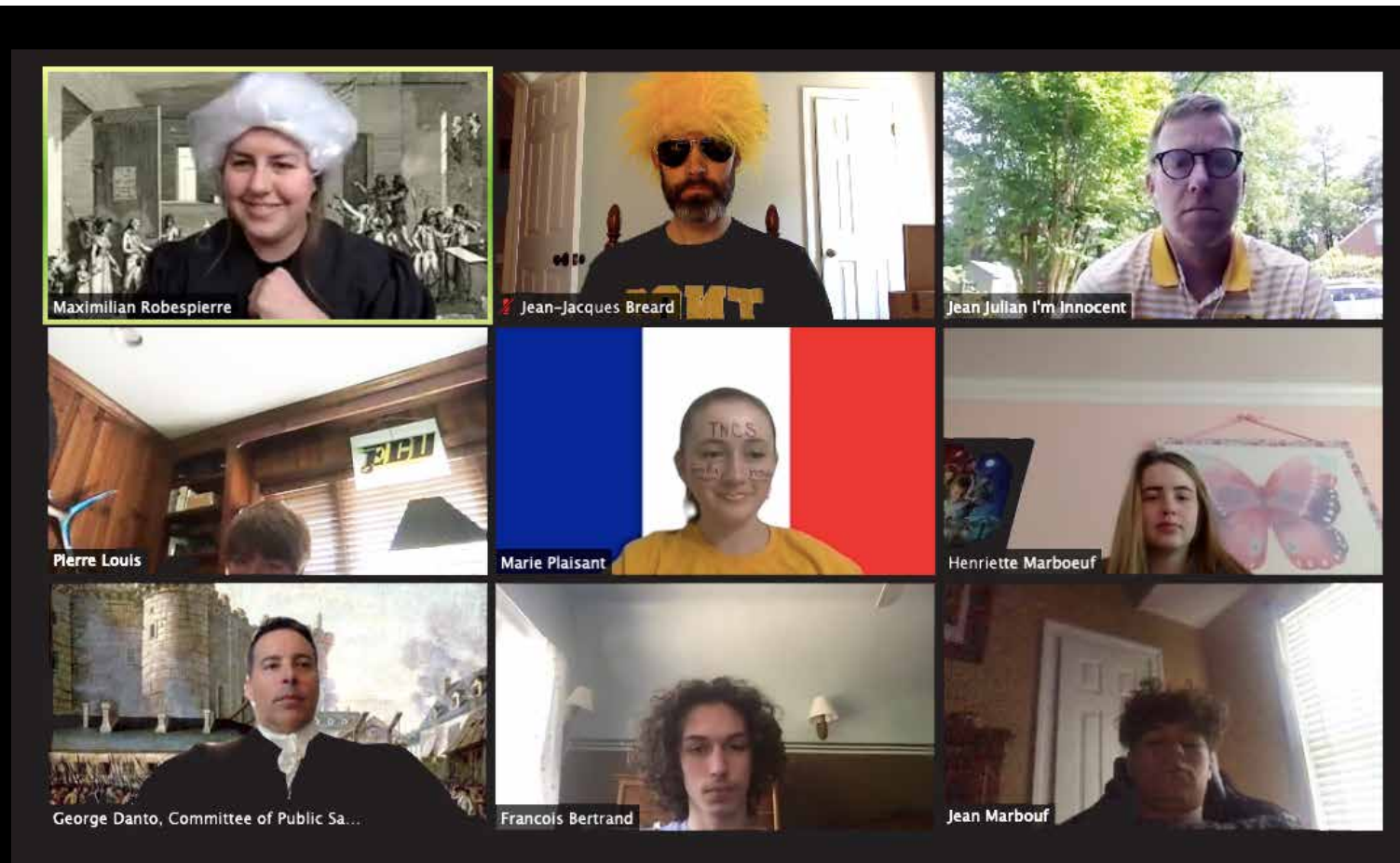
To ensure that we were meeting the needs of our community, surveys were sent to faculty, students, and parents, asking for their opinions and feedback about our distance learning program. The results were overwhelmingly positive and helped shape our

program. One parent shared that she appreciated "a consistent, reliable class schedule, an engaging teacher who didn't give up on our kids' learning, exceptional communication from administration, a positive message that TNCS has a well thought out plan, with emphasis on a message to the kids that exercise and breaks are important. Kids were engaged but not overworked...I can't say enough good things about TNCS."

Faculty have found that this new way of teaching has inspired them to try new things, and to be creative in their planning. "It is fun to be challenged in this new way," shared one, "my brain feels invigorated trying new methods." Another teacher said, "I am so proud to be a part of a team that is making distance learning a real thing, creating new learning opportunities for our students."

"During distance learning, TNCS grew tremendously as a learning community," said Dr. Scott Bray, Director of Teaching, Learning, and Research. "Our outstanding faculty demonstrated tremendous resilience. Given the unprecedented challenge of teaching from home during a pandemic, they found new methods and strategies to engage their students and the larger TNCS community. Their dedication and resolve were truly inspiring." As we look to a new school year, we are taking the lessons we have learned and preparing a plan that will ensure that no matter where we teach and learn - on campus, or at home - our students will receive the same high quality education customized to meet their individual needs.

Visit [tncs.org/covid-19-information-resources](https://tncs.org/covid-19-information-resources) to learn more about our plan for the new school year. •



Students in World History 9 were put on trial as "enemies of the French Revolution" and sentenced to the guillotine. The goal of the simulation was to help show how unfair laws and trials during the "Reign of Terror" led to the downfall of the leaders of the Revolution. Students played the roles of peasants and citizens of France. This activity also fell on Black & Gold Saber Spirit Day.



# Arts & Electives: Connection Is Perfection

By Aaron Webb, Art Teacher and Department Chair

This spring, as we found ourselves moving from the physical world into the digital realm, the experience was truly a journey of growth and discovery. Teachers and students alike ventured bravely into uncharted digital lands together.

I had the pleasure of leading a dedicated and creative team of core electives teachers: Garrett Reese (drama), Steve Humphrey (woodworking), and Jessica DelMonte (photography and technology). We had the help of music advisors Jennifer Morgan and Steve Van Dam, and Taryn Adkins and Margie Gray as elective thought partners. I am grateful for this rewarding and challenging experience; we all grew very close as a team. I appreciate and value all of the energy, creative ideas, and care each of them infused into the collective work. Our mission was to find a way to organize the “flex time” within the distance learning schedule to its greatest potential, giving students a specific structure to work within. Elective Flex Connect was born and became a scheduled rotation of various elective offerings.

For inclusive participation, all lessons were quarantine-friendly using at-home materials. Did you know you can create your

own paint with tea, coffee, and deeply pigmented spices like turmeric? Black-out poetry can be made with junk mail or even leftover newspaper articles. Mrs. DelMonte taught us that beauty and photography subject matter can be found in the intricate details of the most mundane household objects. All you need for drama games is a Zoom meeting, some friends, and an enthusiastic Mr. Reese! Mr. Humphrey transformed his kitchen into a woodshop one week and taught us how to click-train our dogs the next. Our electives classrooms offered an atmosphere that promoted social connection and exploration. This proved true even in the newly established tech realm. We found many students enjoyed Zooming in to simply reconnect and just talk.

In addition to Zoom classes, we also created a website with areas for each of the electives offered in the Flex Connect rotation. The Flex Connect Website was updated weekly with creative challenges and new content that could be used at home outside of class time. The website's greatest success seemed to be the digital gallery. The digital gallery homepage was a place for students to see their finished artwork showcased. It provided pride and connection within the community.

Creation is innately healing, and creating within a community setting brings healing and connection in unison. Zoom elective classes allowed a small slice of our normal connection to be restored. The electives team developed a motto over the journey of distance learning. While working through the lens of distance, we kept our focus on what always matters most, the kids. This time of crisis required us to reframe our arts/elective pedagogy focus. We began with a motto of “Connection Over Perfection.” After teaching and witnessing moments of authentic reconnection with our students we changed that motto to “Connection IS Perfection.” •

Left: Hannah Smith has been using her ample free time crafting. She has made so many beautiful pieces of artwork with positive quotes to help her remain hopeful during this time. Sage Powell also spent time developing his art skills by creating a beautiful cardinal. Mr. Reese led drama exercises during Flex Connect time.

Right: As quarantine began and Mrs. Webb packed some things from the art room to take home, she fired the kiln with a few pieces students had recently completed. Post firing the blues will become clear and reveal the work underneath.







# Health and Wellness Team Keeps Our Community Saber Strong

Staying healthy can be a challenge on normal days, let alone when we are in the middle of a crisis such as COVID-19. While living in a time of a worldwide pandemic, the uncertainty, fear, and disruptions to our everyday lives can greatly increase the likelihood of stress and anxiety. It is often harder for us to make healthy life choices when working from home like eating right and exercising. Despite the fact that our students were not going to be learning on campus, TNCS knew that we still had the opportunity, and responsibility, to ensure that they had the chance to stay healthy in mind, body, and spirit.

The Health and Wellness team, Director of Athletics and Wellness Eric Gobble, Health Teacher (and designated “Chief Engagement Officer”) Jim Morgan, Social-Emotional Coach Kevin DeFazio, Wellness Coach Shannon Elkins, Coach Tyler Stevens, and Nurse Noel Raggio, put their heads together and came up with a broad series of activities that students could use to flex their mental and physical muscles.

On many mornings, Mr. Morgan would lead a ten minute online morning meditation, a chance to reflect and connect before beginning the school day. Mr. DiFazio was always available to meet with students to talk through their social and emotional challenges. To keep us moving, Ms. Elkins, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Morgan led us in live virtual workouts on Zoom. Students and faculty alike participated in these workouts, scheduled for the middle of the day when we could all use a little energy boost. It was a great way not only to keep our heart rates up, but to connect with fellow students and teachers.

“Looking back, it’s wonderful to realize how many different ways the initiatives helped our students and faculty,” says Director of Athletics and Wellness Eric Gobble. “Wellness is such a personal thing. Some people reveled in the big events the team put on, while others appreciated the quieter

moments. This affected everyone differently, and TNCS worked hard to give everyone a chance to benefit from our community in their own way.”

In addition to live events during the day, the Health and Wellness Team developed a page on our website with additional workouts, nutrition tips, stress reduction exercises, meditations, and more. These were free to be used by our students, faculty, families, and the community. “While we worked hard to provide “live” opportunities for social, emotional, and physical wellness for the Saber community, the establishment of the website took things one step further,” says Mr. Morgan. “It became a hub of information and resources for specific needs and personal practices. What’s exciting is this will have a life beyond COVID-19 and will continue to evolve as a part of our Saber wellness empowerment arsenal!” •

While spring athletics were canceled and online fitness opportunities were offered instead, winter teams were able to finish their seasons strong. Here, Max Shavers jumps for the ball during a Boys Varsity basketball game.



# TNCS Athletic History Made

For the first time, TNCS was able to add wrestling to the athletic offerings. 8th grader Wesley McElroy was the first Saber wrestler on a one-man team coached by Eric Gobble, Director of Athletics and Wellness. Wesley had an undefeated season and won his division at the Fat Tuesday Tournament at Norfolk Academy in January. Over the course of the season, Wesley won matches against wrestlers from schools such as Collegiate, St. Christopher’s, Norfolk Collegiate, and Norfolk Academy.



# Saber Updates

**Don Lowe, G’78** was recently awarded the Boy Scouts of America’s Silver Beaver Award. This award is “to recognize registered Scouters of exceptional character who have provided distinguished service within a council.” Don served in the Army as a medic for 26 years before retiring, and currently resides with his wife in Georgia.

**Caroline Melton, T’15** is currently living in Richmond and has just started a new job working as a nanny for her niece.

**Edward Switzer, T’10** welcomed his first child, Elianna Rose Switzer, into the world on January 9th, 2020. She weighed 8lb 15oz and is already a Saber fan!



Do you have updates to share? Send them to [alumni@tncs.org](mailto:alumni@tncs.org)!

## Alumni on the Front Lines



**Zac Gray, G’15** is an EMT with the Forest Ambulance Service. He has been with the company for one year.



**Adrian (Cleavenger) Johnson, G’03**, a Physician Assistant, has been screening, evaluating, and treating patients in the COVID-19 tents outside the emergency rooms at St. Mary’s and St. Francis Hospitals.



**Mary Catherine West, T’14** has been on the local front lines of COVID-19 as a Care Partner in the Medical Respiratory ICU at VCU Health.

## TNCS proudly welcomes two new members to the Board of Trustees



Mark Gottwald has been the chef/owner of Ship’s Inn in Nantucket for over 25 seasons. After spending many years in Los Angeles, where he raised his two daughters and worked in the film and production business, he now divides his time between Richmond and Nantucket. While in Los Angeles he served on several boards including People Assisting The Homeless (PATH), which provides affordable housing and support services, and Westside Food Bank which distributes 4.5 million pounds of food per year to non-profit agencies. On Nantucket he served for three terms on the board of The Nantucket Boys & Girls Club and two terms on the diaconate of the First Congregational Church.



Brude Stoever previously served on the TNCS Board of Trustees from 2004-2009. He began his industry career in 1991 at Wheat First Securities, a Wells Fargo Advisors predecessor firm, where he initially served as an assistant to James C. Wheat, Jr., subsequently emerging as Managing Director-Investments. He serves the same role today for Stoever and Palmore Investment Group of Wells Fargo Advisors. He was ranked by Barron’s as one of America’s Top 1,200 Financial Advisors for 6 years running. Brude attended the Gow School and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in economics from the College of Charleston. He has served on the board of trustees at The Collegiate School and is an active member of St. James’s Episcopal Church. Brude and his wife, Ann, live in Richmond with their three children, Helen, Brude, and Hill.

## TNCS 2020-21 Board of Trustees

Janet Peyton, President  
Wilson Friend, Vice President  
Katherine Whitehead ’93, Secretary  
Corynne Arnett, Treasurer  
Michael Bland, Past President

John Chambliss  
Keith Dull  
Debbie Gibbs  
Mark Gottwald  
Pettus LeCompte  
Caroline Morton  
Brude Stoever  
Amanda Surgner





Mitch Ault and Matthew Centofanti work on their side plank during yoga time in PE class.

Three Sabers placed in the national Scholastic Art Awards for their photography. Audrey Ryland, pictured, was awarded 2 silver keys and 3 honorable mentions, Anthony Vitale earned a silver key, and Megan Bolin an honorable mention.

Paul, Benjamin, Olivia, Morgan, Sam, and Cole were among the alumni who visited in January. They spent time talking to administration about their experiences moving on to college or jobs, and some participated on a college experience panel with Upper School students.

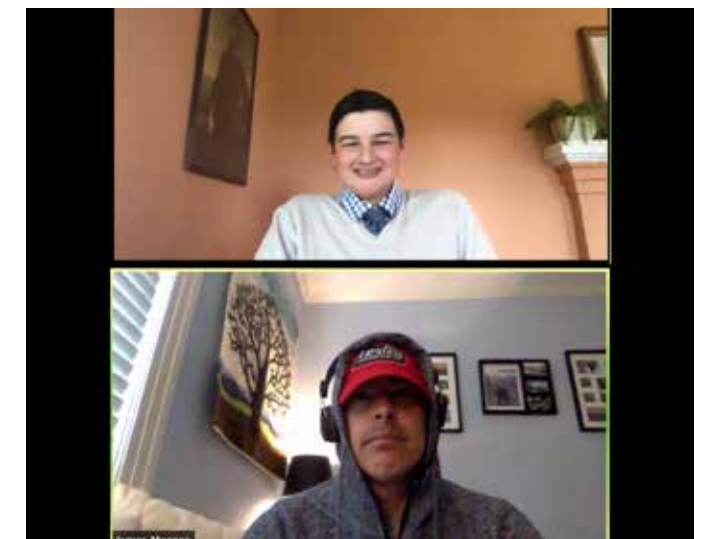


5th and 6th graders spent a chilly day exploring Monticello. They especially enjoyed the Griffin Discovery Room's interactive exhibits.

Anthony Chandler, Ava Dames-Siegel, and Luke Williams show their creativity during holiday craft time with residents of Westminster Canterbury Richmond.

The last House activity before stay-at-home orders was crafting house kites. Leona Williams, Charlie Hornbaker, and Joni Hopkins work on a kite for Panda House.

During quarantine, one "Freaky Friday" was Dress Like a Teacher Day, and teachers decided to dress like students, as well. Mr. Morgan and Sawyer Liesfeld did a perfect job dressing like each other.







4211 Hermitage Road  
Richmond, VA 23227

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## House Banners

