



# REFLECTIONS

Special Edition: The TNCS Strategic Plan

Winter 2019 | Volume 36 | Issue 1







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Cover: Ryland strategically makes his way up the wall as part of the school's first rock climbing team. Photo by Triangle Rock Club RVA.  
Above: Middle Schoolers wear their team colors and get ready to battle for the win at the annual Field Day competition.

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



# Remembering Mr. L.

Nancy Foy, Head of School



"I have never been good at science, but you turned that around. I have a new respect and understanding of science and that is because of you. A teacher's job is to teach kids and help them improve their knowledge. You didn't stop there, you were only satisfied if I performed at my maximum level. You are more than a teacher. **You are an inspiration to me.** I always thought of you more as a friend than a teacher. You always had my back and helped me to be my best at all times. When I have kids, I will pray they will have a teacher like you. It has been an honor to be taught by you and to have had you in my life."

"I want you to feel complete, like you have achieved the Nobel Peace Prize. I want you to leave this world knowing **you were loved.**"

Above: Maggie, Kendall, and Oakleigh were excited to visit with Mr. L. when he joined us for Halloween festivities in the fall.

"You have changed my life for the better and you are the reason I want to become a science teacher."

As I sit down to write for this Reflections, I am reflecting on the impact Donn Lancaster has had on each one of us here at TNCS. When I arrived in July 2012, "Mr. L." was serving as the founding leader of our Middle School. It wasn't long before I knew he was the most visionary faculty member on our campus.

Donn was already reading about and researching schools of the future and had thoughts on how we must change our teaching and assessment practices to prepare our students for their futures, not our pasts. He chaired our first study groups on student assessment and led the charge for innovative teaching and curriculum redesign. Donn's thoughts, vision, and commitment can be found throughout our newly adopted strategic plan, which we are sharing in this edition. He was a key member of the faculty group who worked tirelessly on this plan with our Board of Trustees for more than a year. As we live out this strategic plan, we honor Donn, our friend, our mentor, our coach, our teacher, and leader.

Mr. L. touched so many lives during his 23 years at TNCS. In the days before his passing, students and faculty had the opportunity to write him notes. While our students often have difficulty getting their thoughts on paper, this was not the case when they were letting Donn know how much he meant to them. Included on these pages are a few excerpts from the notes that our students and faculty wrote. They express so clearly the love and respect that we all had for this kind, wise, and thoughtful man.

We are all better for the lessons Donn taught us, the smile he shared with us, his soft-spoken words of wisdom, his compassion and unconditional love, his way of always looking for the good in a student, and his sense of grace, from his selflessness and kindness. He showed us how to live mindfully.

As we say goodbye to this wonderful man, he will live on through his legacy. We will think of him each time we recite our school motto:

Watch your thoughts, they become your words.  
Watch your words, they become your actions.  
Watch your actions, they become your habits.  
Watch your habits, they become your character.  
Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.

In the words of one of our students, "I will never forget the lessons you taught me both about science and life. It was good walking with you Donn Lancaster."

This special Strategic Plan edition of Reflections is dedicated to Donn Lancaster.

"I would watch how **you interacted with each student with compassion, integrity, expectation, and authenticity.**"

"You are a blessing to this earth and you have done so much, touching everyone's hearts deeply. Your art has forever inspired me to see the beauty in even the little things and to appreciate things, even if they seem insignificant. You did so much more than teach me, you made it enjoyable and **you taught me how to look at myself with more respect.**"

"Thank you for changing my perspective and always pushing me to do my best. You inspired me to always be curious. Thank you for believing in me. **Your character has changed all of our destinies for the better.**"



# *the* TNCS *strategic plan*

## A Message from the President of the Board

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Strategic Planning Committee, it is my pleasure to introduce The New Community School's newly adopted strategic plan.

Why does a school like TNCS need a strategic plan? Strategic planning is vital to any organization, providing a sense of direction and outlining measurable goals. A good strategic plan informs both day-to-day decisions and larger long-term initiatives. I am proud to say that the questions asked in this plan and the goals set forth are bold, help position our school for a bright future, and enhance our mission of empowering bright, talented students who are challenged by dyslexia and related learning differences.

The genesis of this plan began more than three years ago, and this final document is the work of numerous meetings with stakeholders within our community: faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and more. You will also find within this summary a new vision statement for the school. As goals of this new plan came together, it became clear that we needed a new vision statement to help summarize what we hope this school will become.

When I look back at all that this school has accomplished during the course of our last strategic plan, I am filled with pride. Thanks to a commitment to that plan, our school went

from an enrollment of 100 to our current student body of 189. We designed and constructed the school's first purpose-built academic building, and raised the funds necessary to build and endow it. We went from a school with spotty wi-fi in a few buildings to a fully networked campus with technology in the hands of every student and faculty member. Our campus is more secure than ever. Our program has grown to meet the needs of our students with better academic, athletic, and artistic offerings, and our commitment to a customized experience for each has never been stronger. I cannot wait to see what we will accomplish with the direction provided by this new plan.

I am grateful for the leadership of our strategic planning chairs, Susan Quinn and Corynne Arnett, the members of our strategic planning team, and everyone who gave their valuable input during this process. I wish that our friend and colleague, Donn Lancaster, could be with us to see this finished product. His wisdom and passion were a vital part of the creation of this new strategic direction for the school.

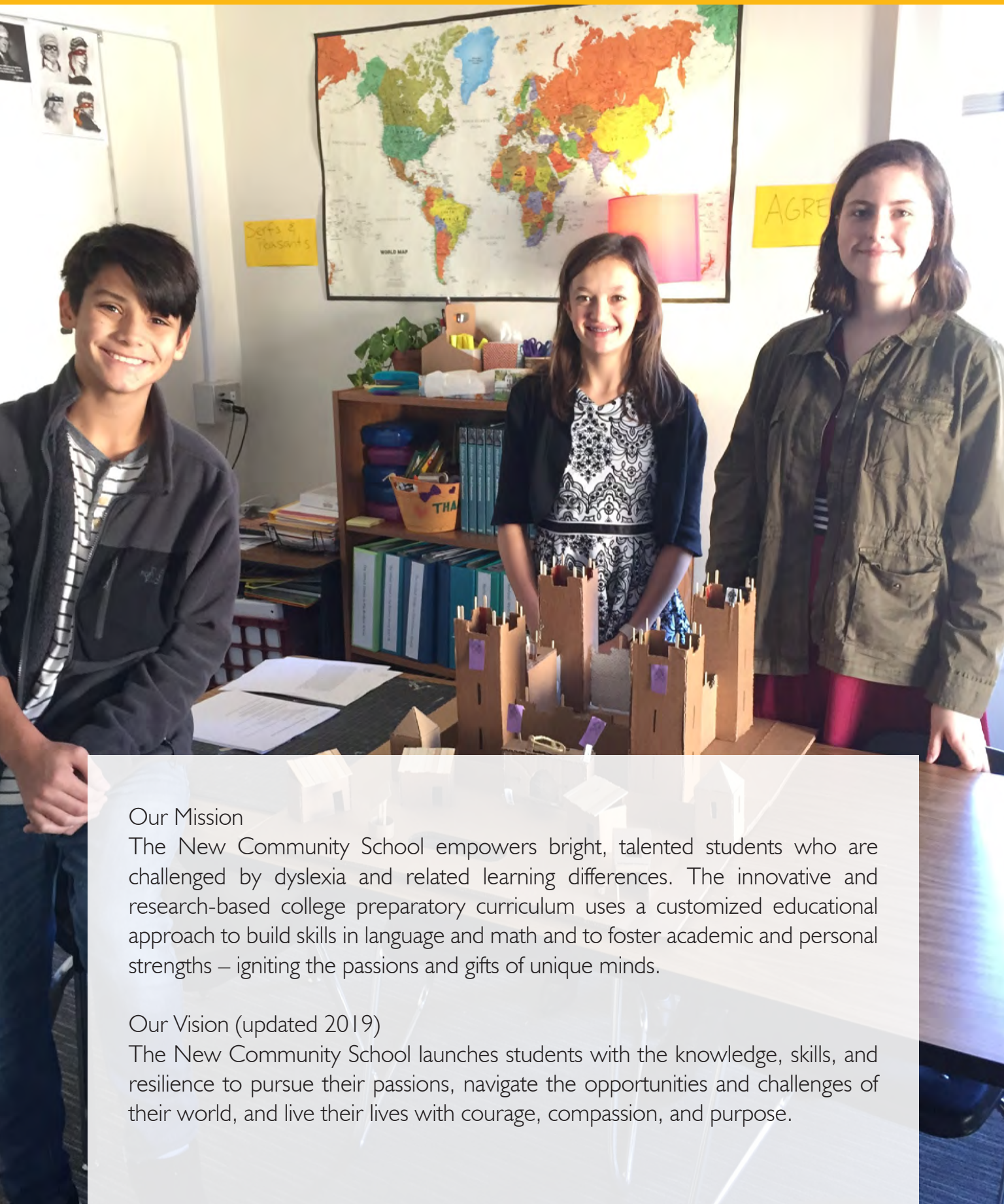
Thank you for being a part of The New Community School's present, and our future.

Michael Bland  
President, TNCS Board of Trustees

Left: Morgan and Davis stop to enjoy the views during the Summer 2018 Europe Trip. Photo by Alex Phillips, Class of 2019.  
Below: Katie and Michael stop for a photo with the statue of James Madison during the Junior Class College Trip in November. Juniors visited James Madison University, Longwood University, and Lynchburg University.







#### Our Mission

The New Community School empowers bright, talented students who are challenged by dyslexia and related learning differences. The innovative and research-based college preparatory curriculum uses a customized educational approach to build skills in language and math and to foster academic and personal strengths – igniting the passions and gifts of unique minds.

#### Our Vision (updated 2019)

The New Community School launches students with the knowledge, skills, and resilience to pursue their passions, navigate the opportunities and challenges of their world, and live their lives with courage, compassion, and purpose.

## Planning for a Bright Future

In 1974, four families came together to create The New Community School, a place where bright students with dyslexia and related learning differences could get the help they deserved to build their skills, uncover their passions, and fulfill their enormous potential. Since those early days, The New Community School has found its home on Richmond's Northside and grown in size of campus, number of students served, and scope of services offered. From humble beginnings of 24 students, today TNCS is serving 189 students in grades 5-12.

A bold, forward-thinking strategic plan is vital to keeping our school healthy, vibrant, and nimble to meet the ever-changing needs of our students. This strategic plan, developed by a team of TNCS board, faculty, and staff members, seeks to provide a framework for growth, guidance toward a bright future. As we look to our 50th anniversary in 2024, we understand that the world our students are living in is a vastly different one from the days of our founding. We seek to ensure that we are preparing bright people with dyslexia and related learning differences with the tools they need to move boldly into college, career, and roles unimagined with the skills, self-awareness, and mindset to be a positive force in their own lives and the lives of others. We know that in an unpredictable future, asking the right questions is more important than having the right answers and that grit, resilience, and courage are needed attributes. TNCS seeks to remain an ongoing and accessible lifetime resource for our alumni and community in an expanding web of guidance, support, and connection.

With this plan, The New Community School is reaffirming our commitment to our mission of empowering bright students with dyslexia and related learning differences. A healthy strategic plan is one that should never be carved in stone. Like our most recent strategic plan, this plan will grow and change with time. As we seek to continually improve our program, we will strive to answer three essential questions:

- 1 How does TNCS design an enhanced, comprehensive experience that prepares our students for their future?
- 2 How do we ensure that TNCS remains a vibrant, relevant, and sustainable organization?
- 3 How do we best extend the reach of TNCS to our alumni and external communities?

Left: Charlie, Leona, and Lauren proudly display the medieval castle they built in 9th grade World History after learning about life in Medieval Europe. All the students showed great resourcefulness, creativity, and ingenuity.



## 1

How does TNCS design an enhanced, comprehensive experience that prepares our students for their future?

## 1

A TNCS education is defined by the comprehensive experience of our students. We understand that in order to prepare our students for their future, it is not enough to focus solely on academic growth. Their social and emotional well-being is just as important to help launch vibrant, resilient graduates. When answering this question of a comprehensive experience, we are looking at the best ways to build a program that meets our students' needs academically and personally, and builds a supportive, cohesive school culture.

As we examine how to design an enhanced comprehensive experience that prepares our students for their future, we will focus our work around these strategic initiatives:

- Refine the **CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES** of the school.
- Define the profiles of **TNCS GRADUATES AND EDUCATORS**.
- Continue to refine the **CURRICULUM** in a way that is customized to the needs of each student, supports the growth of their personal strengths, and is intentionally designed to emphasize college and career preparation.
- Assess the **SCHEDULE AND SCHOOL CALENDAR** to best support our faculty and students.
- Continue to design relevant and effective **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** programs to support our faculty.
- Develop a schoolwide **WELLNESS** plan that supports the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of each student.
- Cultivate a **CULTURE** among students, families, faculty, and leadership that fosters growth, learning, wellness, diversity, and respect.
- Promote an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment where every member of our community feels empowered to **TRUST AND TRY**.
- Identify the human, financial, technological, and facilities **RESOURCES** needed to realize these initiatives.

Left: Kirby practices chords in the first ukulele elective class.

Below: New and returning members of the National Honor Society at the annual induction ceremony.





## 2

For 45 years, The New Community School has remained a healthy organization, thanks to careful fiscal management and good stewardship of our campus and facilities. Today TNCS is stronger and healthier than ever before. As our enrollment has grown, our campus has grown in recent years through the construction of Founders Hall, and the purchase and renovation of adjoining properties.

Education in the United States and throughout the world is changing at a rapid pace. In an age of instantly accessible information, how our students discern information, solve problems, and think critically is just as important as what our students learn. How, where, and when students attend school is likely to change in an increasingly connected and global society. In order for The New Community School to remain a healthy and growing organization, we must work to ensure the future success of the school as an organization, enhance the TNCS brand, ensure our ongoing fiscal health, and identify and manage risk whenever possible. Additionally, we will seek to grow and enhance our campus facilities in a way that understands the changing needs of our students and takes into account their social and emotional well-being as much as their academic growth.

As we seek to ensure how TNCS remains a vibrant, relevant, and sustainable organization, we will focus our work around these strategic initiatives:

- Gather and analyze data to track and monitor the **SUCCESS** of TNCS students and alumni to assess our impact and refine our comprehensive program.
- Enhance our strategies and programs to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality **FACULTY AND STAFF**.
- Strengthen our brand in the community through effective **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS** to our internal and external communities.
- Identify, develop, and nurture key strategic resource **PARTNERSHIPS**.
- Continue to develop the **FINANCIAL RESOURCES** to ensure future success.
- Determine capacity for **FUNDRAISING** and prioritize funding needs, including those identified in the strategic plan.
- Explore alternative streams for **REVENUE, PROFIT, AND BRAND AWARENESS**.
- Evaluate and manage the school's awareness of and **PREPAREDNESS FOR RISK**, including physical, technical, administrative, and financial.
- Continually evaluate our **CAMPUS MASTER PLAN** to leverage current facilities and plan for our future.

## 2

How do we ensure that TNCS remains a vibrant, relevant, and sustainable organization?

Left: Luke and Kai participate in a design engineering activity with skewers and candy during the Middle School winter break celebration.



## 3

The New Community School recognizes the opportunity and responsibility to support our alumni and develop programs to assist non-TNCS students in the Greater Richmond area, expanding the reach of our resources beyond our campus. Recognizing that dyslexia and related learning differences are lifelong, we have an opportunity and responsibility to serve our alumni as they continue their education, enter the work force, and navigate career challenges. We recognize also that these resources should be shared with people who are not TNCS alumni, whether they are students or teachers at other schools, companies seeking to better understand and benefit from their employees with dyslexia and related learning differences, or individuals in our community who could benefit from skills development and a better understanding of their learning style. Additionally, TNCS takes seriously its role in furthering the research into dyslexia and related learning differences and expanding thought leadership in the field.

As we explore how best to extend the reach of TNCS to our alumni and external communities, we will focus our work around these strategic initiatives:

- Explore and enhance **PROGRAMS** that will have a positive impact on our alumni and our external communities, such as:
  - **TUTORING**
    - Language Fundamentals and Orton-Gillingham Based Remediation
    - Distance Learning Support
  - **COACHING**
    - Career Planning and Transitions
    - Support for College Students
  - **CONSULTING**
    - Educational Testing
    - Skills Assessment
    - College and Career Testing Preparation
  - **OUTREACH**
    - Offering TNCS Experts as a Speaker Series
    - Dyslexia Simulation Presentations
  - **TRAINING**
    - Executive Functioning
    - Workplace Training
    - Wellness and Mental Health
    - Educator Training
    - Keystone Manual Training
- Research the viability of creating a division or institute to house **ALUMNI AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**.
- Collaborate and partner with research associations to further the **AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF DYSLEXIA**.
- Expand our **THOUGHT LEADERSHIP** in the field of dyslexia by giving our faculty greater opportunities to speak at local, regional, and national conferences.

## 3

How do we best extend the reach of TNCS to our alumni and external communities?



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Robin Forsyth	Dan Stackhouse
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Kim Harley	*deceased



Questions or comments about this Strategic Plan? We welcome your feedback. Please contact Dan Stackhouse, Director of Development, at 804.264.3276 or [dstackhouse@tncs.org](mailto:dstackhouse@tncs.org).

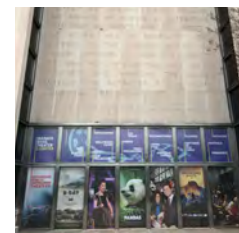
Charlie, Reid, Julian, Sawyer, Seven, and Anthony have fun playing croquet during a visit to Westminster Canterbury Richmond.



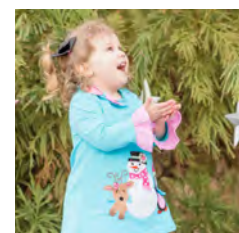
## Saber Updates



**Chad Cassick, G'13** and Brianna (Girimont) Cassick were married on Saturday, July 21 at Alturia Farm in King William County. TNCS classmate John Whitty, G'13 was best man. The couple resides in Aylett, Virginia.



**Laura (Murdoch-Kitt) Clatterbuck, G'04** is currently a graphic designer at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History where some of her art is currently featured. Laura raises money for all the museums through their numerous business ventures.



**Kori Matteson, G'07** is the proud mother of daughter Elyse, who turned 3 in December.



On January 4 college-age alumni were invited to campus to visit with teachers and friends and have lunch with the Class of 2019. Four alumni also sat on a panel with the Upper School to share their experiences transitioning to college: **Woody Kennon, G'17** (Randolph-Macon College), **Gray Boland, G'18** (Mary Washington University), **Sydni Friend, G'18** (James Madison University), and **Marshall Benson, G'18** (Radford University).

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

The **2nd Annual Oyster Roast** for alumni and alumni families was held on Sunday, November 18. Over 40 were in attendance to enjoy oysters, barbeque from Inner City Blues, s'mores, and fellowship.



### Attention TNCS Grandparents!

We are pleased to announce the formation of The New Community School's first Grandparents Association!

**Please mark your calendar for the  
first GPA meeting on  
Thursday, May 9 at 11am.**

Details to follow.



# Saber Scenes



Matthew shows off a huge sweet potato he harvested at Shalom Farms-Westwood during a Green Garden Project field trip. GGP is an elective that incorporates working with your hands and activating your mind through researching, planning, and implementing ways to beautify our campus inside and out.

Hannah, Harrison, and Knox enjoy a game of chess during a trip to neighboring Westminster Canterbury Richmond. Middle School students visit WCR often to visit with residents, take part in games and crafts, and more.

Mr. Keevil, Mrs. Webb, Thomas, Halle, Sami, Maggie, Audrey, Lauren, Jack, Joseph, and Mrs. Kauffman participated in the Virginia Association of Independent Schools Festival of the Arts.



Olivia, senior class leader for Team Red, is passed the sponge during the wet sponge relay. Teams compete in a number of fun activities meant to encourage teamwork and the Saber spirit.

Four seniors, (front row) Emma, Rachel, Gabrielle, and Morgan, led the Upper School volleyball team in their final season of playing.

Chris Houck tries out his skills during the school's first Movie Production Club.



The Class of 2019 enjoyed three days of bonding in Virginia Beach during the annual Senior Leadership Retreat.







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detail, *Lewis Ginter Outback, Patch of Poppies* by Andras Baloty

ART FOR A CAUSE: ART SHOW & SALE  
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MARCH 22-23, 2019  
featuring local & regional artists

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Voted Best Art Event and  
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